



THE MINNESOTA REVIEW

THE LITERARY TWENTIES, I:

Allen Tate, "Random Thoughts on the Twenties"
Frederick J. Hoffman, "The Temper of the Twenties"

FICTION

David Cornel DeJong, Sally Daniels, Norman Rush

POETRY

Isabella Gardner, William Carlos Williams,
Richard Lyons, Gil Orlovitz, Charles H. Foster, Parm Mayer,
Henry Birnbaum, Morgan Blum, Doris Parsons, Leonard Unger

ARTISTS OF THE MIDWEST, I:

Kent Kirby

FEATURES AND REVIEWS

David Jones, Brom Weber, Roy A. Swanson, Neil Myers,
William Stuckey, John Dennis Hurrell, Richard Foster



Greetings to our readers. The editors feel that *The Minnesota Review*, along with several other literary magazines that have appeared in the last two or three years, is part of a modest but noticeable Northwestern literary renaissance. We have chosen to be different from some of these others insofar as we are assuming a rather traditional format (fiction, poetry, criticism, reviews — a rounded diet of literary matter) and declining to profess a “viewpoint.” Many contemporary little magazines, trying to imitate the spirit of some of their great predecessors of the twenties and thirties, have tortured themselves into artificial poses of truculence when, in fact, they have had very little in view beyond a rather trivial yearning to make the bourgeois beast tremble. But of course the bourgeois beast has learned, since the twenties and thirties, to enjoy its shudders, and as the recent commercial success of the Beats has proven, is willing to pay well for the pleasure of them. We think that such magazines lack a seriousness and integrity that we are hopeful ours will have. And we also think that their *a priori* ambition to be aggressive puts a crippling limitation on the quality and range of material they may publish. We have only a few clear principles, and we think that they are both honest and liberating: one, we are interested only in printing “good” writing, whether it comes from Venice, California or the British Museum; two we are not going to let criticism relegate, as it has in some other “traditional” quarterlies, fiction and poetry to minor positions; and three, we are going to try to keep our editorial mouths shut after this little initial splurge of self-analysis.



THE MINNESOTA REVIEW



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richard lyons

The Brush of Tension

I. Arp Barnom at His Easel

But what's the use? I couldn't keep a job,
Some plowing routine scribble with a mob
Of mirror images in matrixed rows
Of faceless collars. I'm not one of those.
I do not think it to my benefit.
My attitude's not critical. No, it
Is just descriptive. Let them type or creep
Fawningly between their files or keep
Explicit books in accurate total o's.
That wouldn't fit my fingers. Heaven knows
I've wished at times for patience. But this paint
Is in my blood that pounds against restraint
Like Gulley Jimson's. I keep seeing squares
Of canvas beckoning, and other affairs
Evaporate, and Daisy knows it well.
But she's a housewife woman who can smell
Disorder in the dark and has a hand
That reaches with a sweeping reprimand
For brooms by instinct. Everytime I paint
My hand moves to her rhythm of complaint
She seems incapable of holding back
And I of answering. She has a knack
Of morals, but my purpose is not good

Nor bad nor even to be understood.
My purpose is to paint and to create
A world beyond the edge of love or hate,
Belief or meaning, other than its own
Restricted formula of color, tone,
And line composed within its conscious frame
And answering only to its private name.
But hell, this room's too small. And my mind seethes
With conflict. Daisy whistles as she breathes.

I sometimes wonder how we fell in love
And what, in God's name, were we thinking of.
Our purposes are so divergent. She
Exists within the hour. Eternity
Is my dimension. Though my sustenance
Is temporal, it is by happenstance
And not confined to routine. I am crude
At speaking gently and at taking food,
And yes, at making love, and I regret
This inefficiency like a bad debt.
What am I thinking? There, I've made a mess
Of that whole area as though the stress
Within my mind had traveled down my arm
And set my hand ajar. It shows the harm
That thinking can inflict sometimes. My head
Is full of paintings, yet a sentence said
In passing nag can wedge between my eye
And hand to splinter on the surface. My
Indifference is invaded.

Hold on, now.
What am I doing? Painting. Paint then. How
Can I fritter on this floor, permitting room
For small annoyances? I cannot groom
Myself to please her. All right, then, accept
It and get on. But she is not adept
At stepping over shirts, at keeping still,
At compromising, and I've had my fill
Of her irrelevant objections, her

Clothes-line commandments like a presbyter
Of household ritual. I am not resigned
To still-lives and the landscapes of the mind
Like this abortive gesture. Even these
Tobacco crumbs mixed in the paint don't please
Me with their textures anymore. The whole
Thing's forced and academic. I've no soul
I sometimes think. It has been civilized
And stifled with decorum and the prized
Morality of Daisy's education,
Lifeless as the sterile peroration
She listens to each Sunday and repeats
In hymns that dig with missionary cleats
Into my spinal —

Christ! again there goes
That goddamn sweeper, like God in the throes
Of chaining muddy Satan from His hill
With righteous incoherencies of will.
God grant that all my incoherencies
Be never righteous. My absurdities
Of dicta are my private prayers, my own
Deformities of ritual and bone
That will not fit another, for I would
Not proselyte for pilgrims in the wood
of the dry mind's vacuum. As I paint
My world of little satans but no saint,
My rules of life are compositional.
That which produces art for me is all.
When the artist, like this tube, is empty, throw
Away the empty casing-zinc and go
To lunch. A purpose has been served, a deed
Accomplished without aspirin. I don't need
As yet a tranquilizer. Paint for me
Soothes like a Miltown after breakfast. We
Ride culture on our stomachs. Daisy sweeps
A passage into ulcers, and she sleeps
As in abeyance from an inner stress
Absorbed from looking on a wilderness

Of petty ritual and plastics. Why
Do I try to paint, I wonder; why do I
Attempt to brush a culture on to time,
To form before the world this world of crime
And schizophrenia with the empty eyes
That look too fast to see, since I despise
It all?

We do not pick our age. We come
Without request out of a vacuum
Into, these days, the sterile room. We cry
As always at our birth. So one must try,
Being given life, to live, which means, for me,
To paint my generation and to be
Alive in tension at the brush's end.
I did not pick my age. I cannot mend
Its surrogate spring fever. My complaint
Is my catharsis, and it lets me paint.
But when my pallet knife slides sideways, so,
And makes a textural smear of red, I know
The fault is not objective. In that groan
Of Daisy's sweeper sings our surface tone
Of personal inner discord. She is blind
With too much looking, seeing not the mind
In one's demeanor, but the yellow thread
Still clinging on the sleeve. To her a red
Tomato is a vegetable. To me
It is a color with a couple shapes or three
Depending on the light, a flattened orb
Awaiting the design that will absorb
It into meaning larger than its form,
Whether ocher eyes or abstract storm.

An artist's wife should have an artist's eye.
I cannot bend the light, nor can I try
To squeeze and square esthetics nor to make
A purple sun conform to the opaque
Dimensions of her middleclass tradition,
Chained to duty, bound by inhibition,

Fenced with that conformity to labors
That take their meaning from one's watchful neighbor's
Nodding in uncritical approval
Of his symmetry. My loose removal
From their oyster strictures sets her teeth
To grinding. Show a profit. Underneath
Her maxims like veneer an emptiness
Distributes its cachectic air. Her dress
Lies on the surface, thinner than this paint
And less in texture as she spreads her taint
Of moral indignation like a gas
Weighted in green. So heady summers pass
Into the frigid winters of desire,
Rutting slowly in the human fire
Of smoldering habit. I have lived enough
Upon the faulty substitute of love.
I need that permanent dimension, art,
To save myself from chaos and my heart
From human ennui. *Tempus fugit*. Age
Administers its wisdom. Our youthful rage
To live outran its aim.

At twenty-five,
I need both art and love to stay alive,
I said. If I were forced to choose, I could
Not choose between my art and Daisy, who'd
Become as much myself as art, a choice
Like, say, between my vocal chords and voice.
Well, I was wrong or rather almost right.
It's more like voice and tonsils or the bright
Actinic sun and candles. Daisy, girl
And dusting woman, as you sit or purl
In fury of decorum, choose you now
Your passage, port your future. Pick.

How

Do you suppose she'd answer if I threw
The gauntlet down? Good Lord, I'm tempted to.

II. Daisy Wheels Her Heart

I've lost my taste for picking foods. I've lost
My appetite for pricing cans. The cost
Is all. When I first wandered down these aisles
Of gleaming merchandise, my heart was smiles
Of choosing as a novice wife, my pride
Of fledgling independence still untried.
It is no longer so. This red spread meat
In cellophane and shape to tempt, repleat
With blood, looks clammy damp to my veined eye.
Within this multitudinous supply
I wheel an empty cart. I cannot find
The filling produce for an empty mind
That's drained beyond the surplusage of price
To purchase nourishment, the imprecise
B-vitamins of love. Arp's pigment love
Has brushed his love for me with words. His rough
Attention, clumped with verbal surfeit, bricks
Me round, to warden and deploy. He picks
Apart my virtues in the name of art
And causes me to mumble-push a cart
Through shining aisles of disillusion, bright
In the gleaming morning of a sleepless night.
He paints. He paints.

He paints me, and he throws
A tantrum if I wish to wash his clothes,
To wash the breakfast dishes or to clean
The toilet bowl. He says what do I mean
By sweeping in his ear? and leaves with care
His pallet knife upon my bedroom chair.

I come at last to push a cart of food
In the sweet communion of commercial good
To nurture my despair, to wonder how
To keep my job, to keep in mind my vow
To love and cherish when the mind grows faint,
To keep in heart a passion for wet paint,

When all I really want to do is keep
My house in decency. Arp laughs. The sweep
Of my day labor that he feeds upon
Increases with his ego. I have done
My share of sharing. I have lost the care
And nurture of my nails. I set my hair
Between the dinner and the dishes. When
I bathe I cleanse far more adrenalin
Than dust from my increasing middle age
In the crevices of undigested rage.

Who are you kidding, Daisy? Do the job
You're in this store to do.

These black thoughts rob
My day of precious time. Now, let me think.
The years accelerate. The minutes shrink
Like Arp's cheap shirts. Daisy, he says, good meat
Is a prerequisite to talent, neat
Apparel an impediment like sin
To art's imperial inner discipline.
Words, words, words, to keep in line
My inartistic energy. Well, mine
Is the harder task, to breathe and live
In the world. Arp is the fugitive,
Although he reads me merely protoplasm,
An ancillary span across the chasm
Cracked between existence and supplies
That keep him painting, while those little lies
Of introspective ratiocination
Keep him hoisted to his private station
Where genius couches on a cloud and where
His shoes are shined by cherubs of the air
Beyond this weathered world, a master man
With a broken belt. So he creates. A can
Of corn, like this, becomes a Midas maize
As long as some inauric scullian pays.
Well, my pavonine Picasso, wake
To this reality: today your steak

Is hot dogs, meat to fit your levis. This
Is the world whose space we occupy. It is
The light of taxes and of wear on socks
Which corrugates one's intellect with the pox
Of sweaty routine.

Whoa there, Daisy, slow
Your ranting introspection down and go
About your business of selecting cans
And packages. Most wives are partisans.
Proceed along these bright inflated aisles.
Your bile is boiling, Daisy, the old smiles
That haloed round your lashes slit to trim
Indentures of depression. You pay him
More personal interest than your mortgage loan.
Pick up a box of Kix and leave alone
That frozen fury.

Apples and ice cream
Remain. I've lost this Saturday. I seem,
In fact, to lose them all, and more than all,
Myself, my own identity in chipping small
Depletions from Arp's chiseling that accrue
In fragments on my dust pan. All I do
Of late, I do, it seems, to make his hand
More firm in brushing or in mixing sand.
Although on Saturday I like to sleep,
Up jumps bright Arp and wriggles from a heap
Of dirty bedclothes and, still in the nude,
Starts brushing in, asking me for food
On the assumption that I will, as I
Have done, provide. And here I am. Oh, why
Do I continue?

Arp intrudes in here.
Even in this commercial splash, his leer
Takes better stretcher shape upon my mind
Than all the fantasies that he's designed
To clutter closets with. Emotions lurk
Between us, waking me. He calls it work,

His chipping slow erection into time,
But I do all the love and labor. I'm
His patron, not his wife, a substitute
Bookkeeper, model, and janitor to boot.
And see me here, also his grocery boy
And quartermaster, pushing like a toy
This cart among these foods, without a list
Of groceries, sleepy, hungry and unknissed.

Where am I now? Where are we now? My brain
Meanders. What is there left to buy that pain
Can utilize? I'm leaning on the air.
I cannot push the cart of our affair
To its account. Some apprehensive thing
Within me hesitates to hear the ring
Of registered details, the itemized
Amount of our discredit, my despised
Confessions traded, like green stamps, for trays,
Or calendars to counter empty days.
What I have come to garner from our past
Affection shreds to fragments. Angers cast
Out tentacles to fasten me with blame.
I can remember only the kinds of name
For derogation Arp still sheets me with,
While swelling, like these oranges full of pith
And price but juiceless, a temerity
Ill-tempered with contempt.

It's hard for me
At last to face the fact, but there it is.
He is an artist and his art is his,
So much so he has nothing else to love.
He's dried his feelings to abstractions of
Affection, like an instant milk, fat-free
For watered kisses of no taste. For he
Has cellophaned emotion. And here I squirm
With hunger in a grocery store, infirm
Of will to break or carry on my life,
No longer lover, but a clerk qua wife.

sally daniels

THE GIFT

"**T**heir saying, 'How Grandpa Dillon would have loved you kids!' always conveyed something special about him," I said carefully, squinting at Jim from the end of the spring-board where I was sunning. What I thought that I was feeling was an obligation to explain the story. "Well, of course we knew when they'd say love they meant *enjoy* us."

Jim lowered one leg into the water, saying it was fine today. "What special?" he said then, politely.

"The other grandparents were very moral with us." I paddled my hand in the lake listlessly. "They didn't think we needed to have our orangejuice strained which we really did, and they tried to switch me to my right hand, and teach me to sew. So that they made us feel sort of wild, and as if our parents might really be too lenient."

"I imagine your parents *were* lenient," he said with his typical brooding coolness, one of those tiresome people with unhappy childhoods, whose vision of themselves as darkling victims, only half-escaped and always only half escaped from maiming forces leave them untouched by the kind of unhappiness which goes with choice. Jim was responsible to no other other than the ideal of himself whole and free — and even his failure to attain that ideal made him special and noble.

I sighed to irritate him. "Yes, we must have been spoiled. But we were sure that if Grandpa Dillon were alive we'd really be spoiled. Really have a ball."

"Because he built your mother's tennis court."

We both looked toward the overgrown, now almost undetectable, tennis court half way between the house and the lake. Its sagging fence and the net posts were all that remained. It must have seemed

pathetic to me even when I was little, since I could remember it when the net was there, drooping and torn and just a few weeds had begun to come up through the rough dirt; I couldn't remember ever feeling impressed with it. "But I don't know if we'd have made the connection exactly," I said, wishing I hadn't started it.

"Weren't you going to tell the tennis court story? The true inside story?" He had fallen back to sun, one arm thrown across his eyes. I toyed with the ways of saying "you are a perfect bastard," not trusting myself to give "perfect" the objectively admiring ring I would want. "Not that you need to," he said. "I can see them now. The taciturn and gentle man of the soil welcoming the gay and blooming young girl into his family in the only way he knew: he made her a plaything by the sweat of his brow. She couldn't cook, she couldn't iron, and poor as they were she needed a woman to clean her house—but she made an old man happy." There was a silence. "Didn't she?" he said softly. Then he said, "no, I have it wrong. She would be restrained, almost shy, what they would call standoffish . . ."

"It's too bad," I said with soothing tones, "that you weren't good at sports."

So he sat up with useless vigor. "Your family has an almost natural preciosity," he said, getting up with dignity and making an unspectacular dive.

I watched him come up and start kicking along on his back before I settled back to sun. I tried to think exactly how my mother had really explained the tennis court when I had first asked about it. I could remember, ". . . but then there wasn't anybody to play with," as if my mother could still feel wryly *that* loss, and "your Grandpa Dillon was a *kind* man," with just the faintest comic touch.

Neither Jim nor Jim's father could know how the rights of a family are established, having battled only their worlds, and hunted only themselves, and hated only their pasts. Jim's father had tried heartily and desperately and despotically to make his son play baseball with the rest of the neighborhood; but Jim, like any only son of a self-made and lonely and grim man, had refused. And had refused everything else his grimly anxious father thought would make him acceptable to a world neither of them were at ease in. Jim's father, leaving the farmland he was raised on for the city, had been the first

to reject, thinking perhaps even that he had found a life so much better than the one he had left that his own son wouldn't have to reject him in turn; or Jim's father might have known all along that in changing his birthplace for Haven Heights Drive he would have to lose his son in turn. That was the way Jim's family was. So I believed that my grandfather's gift to my mother, and my mother's acceptance of the gift, involved us all in something more complicated than Jim would know about. Because really I had heard the story the first time — the first time with the way my mother had felt — after my first riding lesson, the summer I was ten.

The summer I was ten was the summer of forty-one. It was the first summer the family could superfluously afford a summer vacation. The lake had been thought enough other years, but that year was prosperous and we took a trip to Canada, and Jack kept thrusting his arm out the car window and yelling "Heil, Hitler," at the Canadians, and my mother would say "Jack!" reproachfully, and we would all giggle. That was probably the summer of the horse shows, too — one where a man got badly hurt when his horse didn't take a hurdle. But anyway, it was the summer of the riding lessons most of all — sitting on the dock I could get a tight feeling in my stomach thinking about them. I rode with my father often before the lessons, using a western saddle and riding from the stirrups, on the gentle horse which always followed him. I had never liked it much, but pretended I did because my father hoped so much that I would, and because it was so easy to do, simply bounce along behind him. The real thing, my managing my own horse, was not what he cared about. And it would have been the only thing which would have made it, for me, really frightening or really fun. It was so easy, and, I thought, so important to my father, that I would pretend severe disappointment when dinner was too late for a ride before bedtime.

The first riding lesson couldn't have been the worst one but it must have been bad enough. The man who gave lessons was huge, with a brush-cut and a scar on his cheek. His name was an obvious and ridiculous German one, either Hans or Fritz. He was the first person of whom I was seriously frightened, though I didn't know why — there were probably dim nationalistic reasons, and even dimmer sexual ones. Violence, in my kind of childhood, was always the mysterious potential behind order and discipline, so untested that to

find out how bad it might be would have been a relief ; I was one of the children exempt, walking away from whatever silent bully with the icy, hard-packed snowball, tense and imagining it harder than it was since it never came and I could never know. Watching a neighbor training his purebred dog, or my uncle slapping his children's hands, or a school teacher explaining fractions to a slow child, I would see something that I could then describe only as meanness, but which made me feel worse than meanness did.

I would sometimes see the same thing in my father, mounted on his high-strung horse with his boots and his riding crop : perhaps, some Sunday, a guest would be thrown, the horse rearing a little, and my father would grab the reins saying "here, boy," in a gruff voice, and climb on, and I would feel, in almost a panic and as if he were a stranger, that he was somehow angry and glad at the same time, and turn away not to see them canter off, afraid to see what might happen if the horse should rear with him which it never did of course — and then, nearly hating my father, I would feel a fierce pride for him, although, I would tell myself, he shouldn't *want* a horse like that, he shouldn't *like* it.

But the man who gave me lessons was like that all the time — I flinched to see him handle the horses although he never did anything especially harsh. And I believed that the English saddle and lifting from the knees, keeping the back stiff and even using the curb rein, were "right," the adult way of doing it. Decked out in sticky jodhpurs, feeling a variety of physical tensions and discomforts, I was sure that what I was doing was good for me. But I hated the man and feared the horse ; and, belying all the moral tales of my childhood, these feelings never altered in the silent morning rides. At night sometimes I would dream that the man was chasing me on his horse, and I would stumble and run, assuring myself that it must be a game. Or sometimes I would dream that I was mounted on a huge horse and in complete control, pulling the curb rein a little tighter and a little tighter, raising the crop to strike hard before I would wake up, frightened and wondering. There had always been the theory expressed around the household that it would never be really difficult to tell right from wrong if we children were scrupulously honest with ourselves. It was that summer that I began to find it hard to judge myself

"Aren't you coming in?" Jim said, dangling from the springboard, kicking with that extra unnecessary vigor. "If you're not I'm going to take the canoe out." He paddled around to the ladder and heaved himself up. "Want to go out in the canoe?"

I said no, moving out of his trail of water. Jim liked to go out in the canoe by himself, looking as if he were pretending to be an Indian or something.

"I believe *I* will," he said.

"Well, *do*." He handled a canoe oddly well, as if it were one thing no-one had ever cared if he did or not. Like everything he did well, his canoeing was recently learned. Nothing he did connected him with his childhood; his skills all had a new shine upon them. The crucial rule for my brothers, whenever they taught me anything, was that I look as if I'd been doing it all my life—they said that no-one could learn to play tennis after he was ten and *look* good. "Oh, they can *win* of course, but you can always tell." That idea had tickled me. It was a Stanley idea, not a Dillon idea, and while to the Stanleys body and soul were one in all human activity, I always felt that it was to tennis that they brought their most elaborate, subtle and passionate moral convictions.

Grandfather Stanley, when the Stanley relatives all came to visit in the summer, used to love watching his grandchildren swim; to the other adults he said that we were "beautiful and healthy children." He stood there on the dock and said, "They are beautiful and healthy children with fine coordination" to my mother, and it was a benediction. It put a great damper on my enthusiasm for swimming, because the Stanley grandparents, even when they were laughing and charming, couldn't touch anything without its turning into a kind of Good. The Stanley grandparents did all the things you hardly want to believe in—they had never missed reading aloud to each other at bedtime in all their married years it was claimed, and while Grandmother Stanley did watercolors or played the piano Grandfather Stanley translated Chinese poetry or went bird-watching. They were missionaries in China, so when they weren't visiting for the summer there were gently didactic letters full of clever sketches and Chinese characters. They were tacitly acknowledged the most worthy people in the world of my childhood, but they weren't at all like worthy Grandma Dillon, who didn't approve of lipstick

and never wore jewelry — Grandmother Stanley's beautiful collection of jewelry was part of her goodness, just as Grandma Dillon's abstinence was part of hers — and who wouldn't even sew on Sunday, and who baked and scrubbed voraciously. Neither of the grandmothers approved of their grandchildren's freedom, but they had completely different ideas about the ways it should be channeled. The Stanleys weren't visiting the summer I was ten, and Grandma Dillon could express herself unchecked.

Grandma Dillon thought the riding lessons not just luxurious but ludicrous — in her day children learned to ride by throwing themselves on the back of a dray and loping off bareback. And her own daughter, maiden Aunt Louise, had been making a quilt the summer *she* was ten. There were also a variety of reasons why Grandma Dillon didn't approve of Germans, and the one reason she found to approve — "They're good workers, anyhow" — was mitigated by this man's profession and the fact that he called himself "Riding Master." Grandma Dillon had put great stock in work, and Aunt Louis still continued that tradition. Their thoughts about work — by which they meant hard physical labor — ranged from the conviction that a good day's work never hurt anyone to the assertion that they'd be ready to die when they couldn't manage a good day's work. It made them forget their troubles, developed their characters, and left them immune to whatever temptations might conceivably befall them. If the riding lessons bothered Grandma Dillon, the tennis court had to have been anathema. When Grandpa Dillon was building the tennis court his wife must have thought of a million things he might better be doing with himself. And when she happened to look out her window to see him slaving away at it, she must then have plunged herself into one purifying task after another. He was doing it for a grown woman who was already carrying his grandchild.

Of all the sturdy widows who lived among the vineyards and lakes of western New York, and baked in coal stoves late into the thirties, and hated Roosevelt, and believed that God would see to it that *their* grapes went toward grape-juice, Grandma Dillon in the end had most cause for despair. Not just because she lived to see her oldest grandson home from the war, smoking and drinking and an atheist too. Not because she lived to see her youngest grandson

taking violin lessons because he wanted to — though she pretended till the day she died that his mother made him take them. It was everything — store bread and frozen vegetables even in the summer, and the war, and her strange grandchildren who apparently took after their mother, and the fact that she lay helpless from a stroke. But in the end she must have seen — even Aunt Louise wore lipstick and ceramic jewelry in the end — that the world would never right itself into the world she had known. In her day Grandma Dillon could feed five extra at a moment's notice, was sought out for advice by brides and bachelors, was hearty and fun, and a very strong woman. But before she died even her youngest grandson was a little patronizing. In her case it wasn't just a change in the times — it began when her son brought home a girl from college and her husband built the girl a tennis court.

The summer I was ten, and everybody sang "There'll Always Be An England," and didn't really think the United States would get into the war, was a summer of reading taboos. My mother would say, "You'll ruin your eyes," and firmly grab *Jane Eyre* away, or "you don't want to read that stuff," when she found me with a magazine article about Storm Troopers and their victims, and then that magazine would disappear forever. I was fascinated by those articles and the dramatically shaded sketches that illustrated them, although they always made me feel nauseated and weak for hours after. At night my oldest brother had beach parties, and they were also taboo. All Edward's friends would come into the house and make jokes and talk to our parents, and one of the boys named Howard Chitsholm, a boy I wanted to marry when I grew up, would dance with me and say that I was the best dancer of all the girls there and that he'd take me for sure to the next dance — and then they would all change into bathing suits and go off to the beach, for a while laughing and splashing and whooping so loudly that I could easily hear them from inside the house. They would become silent before my bedtime, and I couldn't stay awake long enough to hear them come back to the house again. In bed I hated first my brother, then my parents, then Howard Chitsholm. Or, if my riding lesson came the next day, I would think about it and the Storm Troopers until I was shaking all over. Fortunately my youngest brother had been moved into my bedroom for the summer, and I would wake him

up to talk with when I got very upset. We would talk about ghosts or puzzling aspects of geography and science.

It was unlikely that these various taboos had any link with the riding lessons in the minds of the adults. But to some extent certainly all of the mavoided that topic too. My mother didn't really want me taking the riding lessons — "awfully Prussian," I overheard her saying to my father the night after the first one — and Grandma Dillon thought them silly. But the two women didn't feel the same way at all underneath. And even my mother was reluctant to ask me very much about the lessons. "You like him all right, don't you?" she might ask about the Riding Master on the way home from a lesson. Then, because around her it was difficult to take anything too seriously, we would both begin to laugh.

"Oh, he's *awful*, just awful," I would sigh, mimicking him grim, straight and sullen on his horse.

"What on earth do you *talk* about?" my mother would ask with exaggerated perplexity.

"We *don't*. We never say a *word*." And then we would both laugh as if the riding lessons were the funniest things imaginable.

"Well, let's try to get in a little tennis this afternoon," she would say then, as if closing the topic with relief. Or sometimes she would provide bits of wisdom about men, and the particular quirks of my father who loved to give gifts and surprises we didn't always want to my mother and me. "I think you will always respect your father," she would say, "but you'll find yourself humoring him more and more. You won't always feel it's fair that you have to humor them," she would frown ahead at the road soberly, "but in a way you should like to."

"Men, you mean." I would feel very shy.

"Perhaps you'll have a career before you marry," she would say vaguely. My mother had come of age in an aura of Edna St. Vincent Millay and dreamy girl graduate feminists, and, though she graduated and married in the same week, she was busy writing a scenario in a New York basement when she discovered she was pregnant. She had come to think of the unfinished scenario as an interrupted career.

Neither of us knew that the days of that kind of career were past, and we understood each other exactly on the subject. It was becom-

ing increasingly easy to understand my mother on many subjects. And I began to find Grandma Dillon simply rude when, every time she came to dinner, she'd sit down with "flowers and food don't mix, to my thinking."

"Well, I have learned," and everyone would look expectantly at our twinkling father to hear his response for the millionth time, "these many years, the more flowers the less food."

I stared stonily at him while everybody laughed happily on cue. I hated my stoney stare because really I wanted him to go on saying that at every dinner always. But this time, for once, he should not be humored. "I would like candles tonight," I said, studying my plate. For years, off and on, my mother had suggested candles to a chorus of jeers.

My father cleared his throat and his tone was as before. "For years my females have been after me to eat by candlelight, and for years I have insisted on seeing what I eat." He stretched elaborately back to get a match book from his pocket. "But you will notice, Edward, and John Durand, and little Andrew, that there comes a time when a man cannot withstand longer." He handed me the match book and stood poised by the light switch. "I have reached that point."

My brothers groaned and were horrible, but Grandma Dillon said, "I always wanted to eat with just candles, and it's kind of funny but I'm glad I got the chance."

After dinner that night I heard Edward talking in serious tones with our parents on the porch. "Peggy's getting spoiled," he said. "She always gets her way and everybody acts as if hurting Peggy's feelings were about the worst thing that could happen around here. What about Grandma's feelings?"

"Well, I don't know about that," my father said with the meditative relish such conversations inspired in him. "One of the things I've found is that I've had to be different with each one of you. You know, they say treat all your children alike, but I've found . . ."

"Margaret's growing up," my mother murmured.

"Now you take you for example, Ted," my father said.

I slipped away from their voices, not wanting to find out if my mother was going to defend me. My tone was, "well, if *that's* what being childish is," with a jaunty sneer, for it was certain I hadn't acted the way the *women* always acted around my father. And when

my father called out for me to go riding with him, first I wasn't going to answer, but then suddenly, without knowing why, I ran to the barn as fast as I could. We rode side by side that evening, while he pointed out views of the lake as if I were his guest, and when I gave a Tarzan whoop and managed to kick my lazy horse into a gallop, my father raced me as if he wanted to win. Even when we turned back and had to go down hill I wasn't the least nervous. And I kept my horse in control the last fifty yards to the barn.

"I'll make a horsewoman out of you yet," my father said as we unsaddled, and I knew as soon as he said it that all through our ride I hadn't really liked it at all, but had been angry with him and had wanted to show him I was capable of — whatever I ought to be capable of.

It was too long ago to reconstruct the circumstances that made me the candidate for riding companion. Or why, since none of us cared about riding, I should need to prove myself capable of anything. The spring before that summer my brothers had pooled their resources to give me my first legitimate tennis racquet — with Australian cat-gut strings, they told me twenty times — for my birthday: I accepted it with embarrassed, modest delight, since they gave it to me with patronizing geniality. And that summer they began letting me play doubles with them some. I had, essentially at least, their form and their ways, so I made the same melodious pings on the cat-gut that they made, and I usually went to the right positions on the court after each stroke, and my back hand was almost as strong as Jack's. It was natural and rhythmical and quite dramatic often. Long after, though, when there were two horses in the stable and my father asked, I always felt it necessary to go riding, often incredibly spoiling after-dinner doubles. The sort of choice which would have pleased Grandma Dillon if she were alive, because maybe, she'd think, there is some grit in one of them after all. But at those times how reproachful Grandmother Stanley was at my upsetting three peoples' plans just to do what I wanted. Knowing how all the family lined up on the issue, I wondered how Grandpa Dillon would have. Perhaps he wouldn't have taken sides at all on such things.

But not like Jim, of course, who would say, "Do what you want, for God's sake." I waved to Jim, or to a struggling canoe in the middle of the lake I thought must be Jim, but he couldn't see me. A

motor boat was buzzing the canoe, carefully though, not too close, and the canoe rode its waves without difficulty. It was so easy to believe, I thought, that if anything very bad or very good was to happen it would happen here, and not away somewhere in the rest of my life. I could only bring the rest of my life home, helplessly, to get the right perspective on like the school friends you have to bring home with you to learn the awful truths about. While the family discreetly lines up, takes sides, and settles the perspective.

My family had always been taking sides and settling something or other. When I was ten it was only matters like the evening gowns: toward the end of every summer my mother used to come back from shopping with three or four evening gowns from which, after she modeled them, the family picked the prettiest. That summer though she brought home among the soft full pastel dresses with frothy and fairly bare shoulders, a drab black one, with long sleeves, which was like any dress except for its length.

"This," she said, pulling it out last with wistful affection, "is a dinner gown. Your dad doesn't like black of course, but I thought . . ." she trailed off and then went on with a poorly concealed attempt at deceit, "at my age it would look better."

"The dinner gown absolutely," Edward said when he saw it, and I envied him for knowing immediately what it was. The rest of us much preferred a deeply rose and rusty one, and Edward had gone back to his book, and my mother began to say, "Well, I guess the rose . . ." when I acted from a new aesthetic recognition.

"The black is much more chic," I said, thrilled with myself. It brought down the house. "Chic, chic," Andrew giggled, holding his sides. "I'm a chic shiek," Jack kept muttering out of the side of his mouth, posturing around mother with slitted eyes.

"So it's *chic*, is it," my father said resonantly. "Here I thought it just made your mother look skinny."

Edward threw down his book and addressed me as his equal. "In *this* town," he said, "a good vocabulary and a good-looking dress are equally hilarious." He stalked out of the room in some private fury.

Fortunately, Grandma Dillon and Aunt Louise didn't see the black dress for several weeks after its purchase. As it was, the dress fulfilled my wildest dreams and their direst predictions, since after that fall's trip to New York for the annual business convention, my father re-

ported that the dress "wowed the men" and my mother confided that she'd had her first, *very* dry, martini in it. Although by the beginning of winter my father developed a tentative pride in the dress, that summer, especially after Grandma Dillon saw it, he felt distinctly uneasy about it in spite of his jokes. At one point he inspired my mother to say, in the most decisive tone she had ever used, that she did not intend to imitate a full-blown rose the rest of her life.

The thought of the rest of my mother's life — that alarmed me when I was ten. Until that summer I thought her world a settled, unchanging one, and that only my brothers and I grew and changed. And sometimes that summer I wasn't sure if it was me, or everyone around me, or the whole world that was changing, and though my mother didn't in fact look quite so full blown and rosy as before I couldn't tell if it was my view of her which changed or if she really was changing. If she was thinner, then either it was because the Stanley grandparents refused to budge from China, which gave her bad dreams at night she said, or it was because of new clothes like the black dinner gown. When, on summer afternoons carloads of whooping men and squealing women would drive in to swim, splash, and leap in huge awkward jumps off the springboard, I didn't know if other summers I had somehow failed to notice how unpleasant it was to have them, or if this was in fact a new bunch of people descended on us. Shrieking, slipping on soap, falling off the dock with great flailings, ducking each other with gurgling high-pitched laughter, they stole our water. One man who came always gave Jack a dime for carrying his beach bag, and Andrew a dime for opening his car door, and he would always try to get me to do something too, which I didn't like — he was a very funny man, but he would always try to slip a dime into my pocket, though he knew it made me awkward. Once a high school friend of mine who had to be a waitress in the summers told me, with trembling lips, that some people left tips in water glasses or in the midst of gravy on their plates — that man, Ed Butler, would have been one of those people. The men in their swimming trunks, with those cakes of soap on ropes hanging around their necks — wild ducks or *varga* girls on the soap, like medallions — blended sometimes with the Riding Master and the Storm Troopers, but Ed Butler did most of all.

I complained about Ed Butler and his dimes to my father and my father thought up this gag — gags were another new thing that year

—in which I was to come strutting downstairs with a beach bag full of things and hand it to Ed Butler and tip him *fifty* cents. It was thought to be very funny, and Ed Butler laughed hardest of all though my mother said it wasn't nice. It was only though when I was marveling at my friend the waitress and her accepting silently such disgusting tips when I thought of Ed Butler and realized that my fifty cents hadn't come from my savings banks, or even my allowance, but from my father's pocket.

"To be perfectly frank," my father would sometimes say, perhaps at Sunday dinner most often, "I'm not so sure I would want to teach my kids to turn the other cheek."

"Mmram," mother would say, "I don't think you have to worry about that."

"Oh, I *admit* it's purely theoretical," looking at us one by one with feigned severity. "But I would go so far as to say turn the other cheek to anybody *weaker* than you are. It's a funny thing, though . . ." and he would give his talk about how, when you stand up for what you know your rights are you never have to worry much about either cheek. My father had a hundred stories about tough-nut integrity proved invulnerable, uncrackable, and he began them all with "you know, it's a funny thing" though he thought it really the most natural thing in the world.

"The thing that makes that difficult," Edward said, "is that everybody decides what his own rights are." Even before the war Edward was beginning to say things like that very often. I never quite understood what he meant, except that everything my father said was without use. "I mean, what rights would you grant me?"

"Why," with his slow relish, "I guess I'd grant you the right to use your mind as well as you can if you'd remember what I said about people weaker than you are." He squinted upward for effect. "The more you use what you've got, maybe you'll find other people have the same thing. A brain or two, say." We all laughed, Edward too, who probably hadn't expected that to be his right.

"What've I got?" I giggled shyly.

"Well," he held the word a full beat, "I'd say you ought to worry more about your high horse than your brains. Pride can work in some awful funny ways. Sometimes *good* ways," he said clearly above the laughter. "And there's a lot less pride in this world than people think,

too. I would choose to see more of it if I had my way."

"You're very unbiblical today," my mother murmured.

"Yes, I *am*. And I'm not so sure but what the gospels wouldn't go along with me if they were written today." That was part of my father's pride. He had too much integrity not to know what was right and what wrong, and he had a quiet confidence that whatever he thought right in all honesty and common sense, God would think right too.

"Nothing matters *that* much," my mother often said, meaning that there was no principle so large, no love or hate so profound, no pain so prolonged that one need despair overly-long at loss or discovery. That is what she would have said if she'd known how I felt about the riding lessons. Often, the night before a lesson and waiting for my parents to come in to say good-night, I would imagine the scene of my simply bursting into tears and telling them how I couldn't stand the man and feared the horse and hated the lessons. And they of course would say how completely silly, that the lessons would stop at once, that they were after all only for fun. I knew exactly what it would be like, all exhausted from sobbing, with a feeling of peace and relief as they tried to make me laugh a few times and told me there were certain things one person couldn't *abide* that other people were crazy about, and there was just no sense in doing something you didn't like unless you had to, which, of course, I didn't. To wake up the next morning with absolutely nothing to do but fool around in the summer sun without worry — it was nice to think about, but I didn't want to do it.

Because, I decided, when the summer ended and the smell of the horse which stayed with me long after my bath and into the night was gone with the fall, and when I could no longer remember the feel of the steaming flanks heaving, or the horse's quivering against a horse-fly, or the stolid lunge down a hill, and everything about the horse and the Riding Master was dim and half-forgotten, it would begin to mean something else to me. I would feel it behind me, left behind not because I had seen-a-thing-through or because I had pretended to please my father, and not because I had overcome my fear certainly, but simply because the summer would be over and the lessons done and whatever it was that I should really hate, really fear, would be left undiscovered until some other time.

I was exempt. Too lucky maybe to ever know for sure what I had

failed to meet, and lucky enough to believe that, whatever it might have been, I had been ready to face or defeat it if I'd had the chance. But still, things had changed because even then, that summer, when my mother told me about Grandpa Dillon's making the tennis court I had begun to smile a little politely and formally at the idea of that kindly, gentle man who had bestowed such gifts. And passing the tennis court on the way to the lake I had begun then to know it as some sad relic of the happy and sweet and very much bygone days which even I, born much beyond my grandfather's death, had had my happy share in, still had my share in until, passing the tennis court, I came finally to see its ruin and my apartness from it almost infinite in the distance of my life which was to come.

To be rhetorical I said to myself in a fairly loud voice, "My father did, or did not, give me a better gift," and the notion that I didn't know what gift, precisely, I was talking about pleased me. The nightmare of a foaming wild horse was as unreal as the vision of those cheerfully self-conscious people with their swooping dancing grace standing well behind the back lines in their swirling pleated white skirts, or white ducks, all white except for the green visors guarding against the sun, calling "nice shot" or "sorry" back and forth, and "oh, *sorry*," when the ball dropped weakly just over the net and gave one the volley unfairly. The tennis playing — now on park courts — went on, and the horses were gone, and each was as unreal as the other.

Edward and his very pregnant wife and his small son were coming slowly down from the house for a swim, and while the woman and the boy seemed incredibly healthy and real, Edward seemed somehow as improbable between them as anything I could imagine.

"Hi," I said.

"Hi," they said. "How's the water? Where's Jim?"

When the others were splashing around near shore, I said, "isn't it funny how the tennis court hasn't been plowed up or anything, or reclaimed? I was thinking about its just sitting there until — isn't it funny?"

"I guess so," he said, "but you couldn't really reclaim it because it never had a topping and it would cost more. . . ."

"I just meant that it was funny."

"Ted," his son yelled, "*watch* me." He poured a pail of water over his head. "Aunt Peggy, *watch*." He did it again.

"He's a beautiful and healthy child," I said, not to be ironic, but to speak a rather stirring truth. Still Edward recognized the source, and laughed. He went to help his son and wife pour pails of water over each other.

And Jim came back with the canoe. We left the little family doing various things with pails and pebbles and started back to the house. I tried to talk to Jim and he didn't want to, and for a moment I thought that I was lonely, but I wasn't even that.

"If I could tell you . . ." I said.

"You mean about the tennis court?" He threw a stone impatiently through the trees.

"No, about the summer I was ten and . . ."

"You mean when your grandmother had her stroke and you all huddled scared to death. . . ."

"No, that was later, in the fall."

"Well, what about that summer then, because of course I want to understand you thoroughly and how else unless . . ."

"I guess I won't," I said. And suddenly I didn't care at all if he knew what had happened because I wasn't lonely, except that I believed I had probably escaped what none of the others had quite managed to escape, and that was bound to make me sad sometimes. But we would go now to sit with my parents on the cool porch and listen to them argue with deep pleasure whether or not the lemonade needed ice-cubes, because the issue had no end between them, and Jim would feel somewhat wistful and cheated though content, and I would feel much less sad and only a little less free, because we would all feel so peaceful, and beautifully happy.



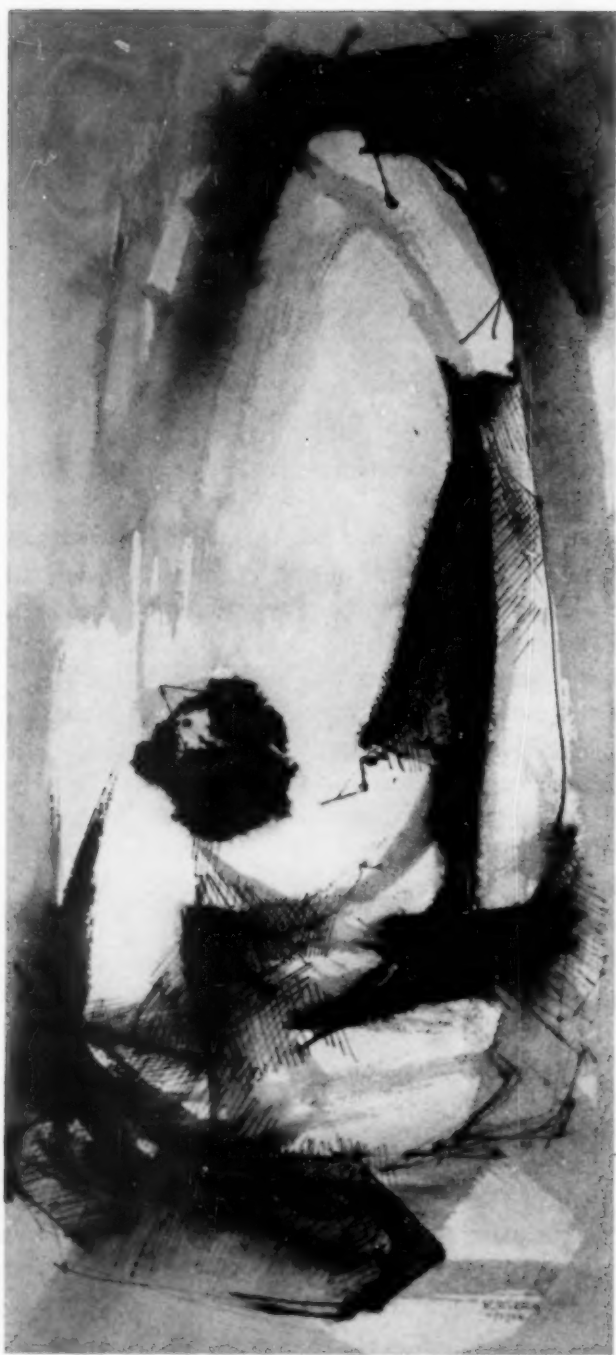
7 Birds, Ink and Water Color, 1959.

KENT KIRBY

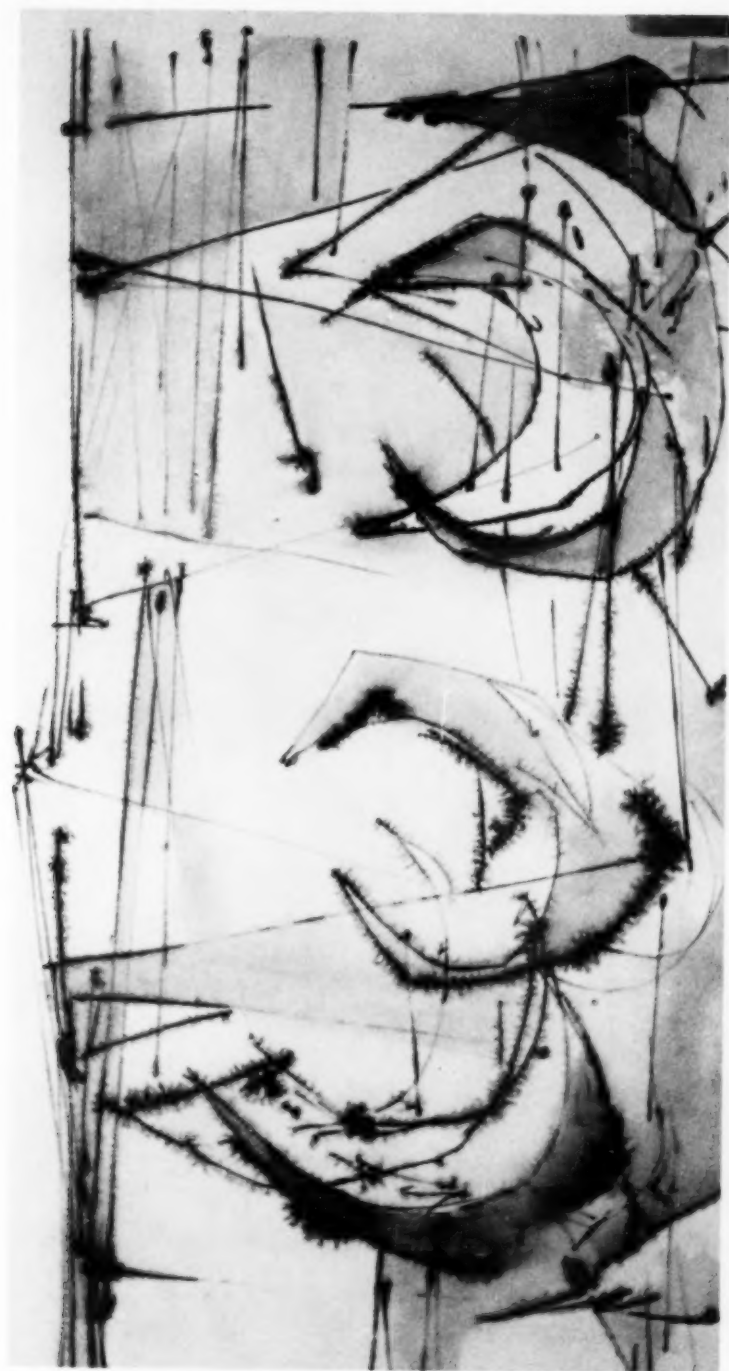
In 1956 Kent Kirby graduated from Carleton College with a major in art, a wife, but no job. When offered a chance to teach art at Franklin Junior High School in his home town of Fargo, North Dakota, he took it, even though it meant taking some education courses. By commuting between Fargo and Grand Forks he was able to earn an MFA degree from the University of North Dakota in 1959, which degree enabled him to leave public school teaching, a job, he says, that "one could not drive me back to with a bull whip."

Mr. Kirby is now an instructor at Muskingum College in New Concord, Ohio. Although only twenty-five years old, his success as a painter has been rapid. Recently he took first prize in oil and first prize in water color in the 1960 exhibition at the Zanesville Art Institute. This combining of oil and water color awards began with the North Dakota Annual of 1958, where he took the purchase prize for an oil and a second prize in water color. This year, also, he received a purchase prize in the 2nd National Water Color Exhibition at the Oklahoma Art Center of Oklahoma City, his first recognition in a national competition. His painting is now part of that institution's collection of the best of contemporary American painting.

Mr. Kirby, like all good painters, is an accomplished draftsman. Because of the high quality of his work and because his prices are still low, he seldom retains possession of a work for long. It is thus difficult to collect together the best examples of his drawing since they are, like his paintings, widely distributed in private collections. The accompanying five drawings, however, are typical of his work of the past two years.



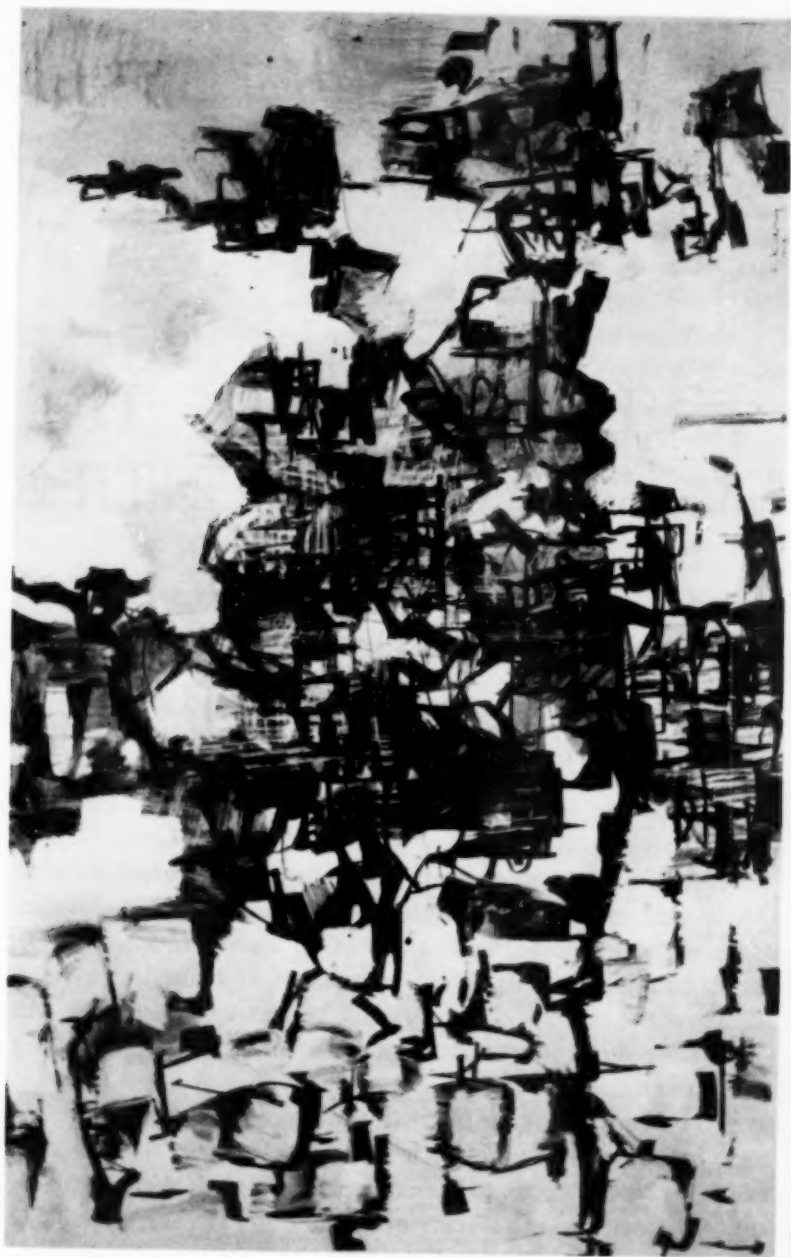
Suspended. Ink and Wash. 1958.



Beach Forms. Ink and Wash. 1958.



Angry Crowd. Ink and Wash, 1960.



View of a City. Ink and Tempera, 1958.

the literary twenties, I

(Part II of The Literary Twenties, featuring Arthur Mizener on F. Scott Fitzgerald and Mark Schorer on Sinclair Lewis, will be published in the winter issue.)

frederick j. hoffman

THE TEMPER OF THE TWENTIES

There is a really serious question whether decades are feasible as units of time. What is so distinctive about the number ten, except as an aid in counting? Isn't it true that, looking at it in terms of generations, a writer's span comprehends two or three decades? Yet the 1920s seem to have been from the start designated as something distinguished and special. Why is this true?

There is, for one thing, the limitation of events. The Twenties were neatly blocked off by the War at one end and the Great Depression at the other; they were years that followed one great form of modern disaster and preceded another. They were therefore comparatively free, with the release that came from the ending of a major war, and not yet handicapped by the fears, suspicions, and doctrinal myopia that inhibited the writers of the 1930s. The war was a shock, but it was a *liberating* shock which left most of the energy and imaginative brilliance undamaged.

There is the curious matter of creative abundance. There are times like these, when writers who for a decade or so show no especially impressive talent but come to their time of genius at approximately the same time, within a few years of one another. In the case of the 1920s, the previous decade was a time of apprenticeship, of fits and starts, and of clarification. The years 1908-1915 were especially important, for example, to modern poetry and to the formulation of new

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critical principles, at the time when Pound and Eliot and many others were beginning. The first real work was done then, but its results were seen in works of the early 1920s.

A number of writers — the names of Yeats, Gide, Mann, Joyce come to mind — transcend considerations of decade, though they as well presented their most clearly effective diagnostic portraits of the modern mind in the Twenties. Writers like Hemingway and Fitzgerald could not have produced anything but juvenilia before 1920; they were at their most brilliant in the decade following. Their writing was of the substance and of the manner of the postwar decade.

But perhaps most of all, there are atmosphere, spirit, mood, and élan. However difficult to define or describe, the “temper of the Twenties” was remarkable for its power of tolerance and encouragement. All forms of rebellion, protest, satire, and experiment, however erratic or naïve, were admitted. Perhaps it was no accident, therefore, that the finest and most precise literary insights into our special kinds of value, problem, and agony are given us in this decade.

Almost anyone can prove the decade’s brilliance by citing relevant texts. There is no comparable stretch of years; at least there has not been since the 1840s or the 1850s in American literature, the 1850s in French. A succession of works, which have held to their initial success in the decades following, forces attention to the 1920s and stirs the wonder over causes and reasons. In the brief period of 1921–1925 alone, we have *The Waste Land* (1922), *Ulysses* (1922), *The Magic Mountain* (1924), *Harmonium* (1923), and *The Great Gatsby* (1925). The second half of the decade matches it: *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *The Counterfeiters* (1926), *The Tower* (1928), *The Bridge* (1929), *The Sound and the Fury* (1929). These books we consider “classics”; they focus attention upon their time and upon a civilization of which they are a special manifestation. There are lesser lights as well: *Babbitt* (1922), which gave us a language of satire and parody; *Tulips and Chimneys* (1923), which continues to serve as point of reference in the analysis of modern romanticism; the cumbersome but perdurable *An American Tragedy* of Theodore Dreiser (1925); the symptomatic and crucial *The Professor’s House* of Willa Cather (1925); and of course, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929).

I list these titles not in a mood of celebration, but to suggest that the “temper” of the decade was not superficial. We have been per-

sistently led to believe that the generation which Fitzgerald's Amory Blaine greeted at the conclusion of *This Side of Paradise* (1920) was guilty of a thousand errors in taste and of vulgar irresponsibility. This prejudice concerning the decade is maintained far beyond the success of Frederick Lewis Allen's *Only Yesterday* (1931), which established it.

It is important to note the *way* in which the decade's reputation was made. It ended in a financial crisis, which proved subsequently also to have been a moral crisis. To this moral perspective are added the expressions of repentance made by the men and women who most enjoyed the "gaudy spree." This dramatic "morning-after-the-decade-before" situation is nowhere better presented than in Fitzgerald's description of Charley Wales ("Babylon Revisited," written in 1930), as he faces his most severe critic, Marion Peters: "He believed in character; he wanted to jump back a whole generation and trust in character again as the eternally valuable element. Everything wore out." (*Taps at Reveille*, 1935) Wale's ambition to "jump back a whole generation" in order once more to find "character" has an especial reference to his personal problem; but it is also intended as an expression of regret, that so remarkable a time had also proved so debilitatingly vulgar and irresponsible.

Such a view as this assumes a tradition of "character" that had momentarily been interrupted but should once again be sustained. We have been primarily a *moral* people since 1929; our moralities were re-enforced by concern over economic crises, which were in turn replaced by military urgencies. Since 1945 we have been too busy attempting to keep up with shocking scientific developments really to do more than cast an occasional nostalgic glance back at a time that now seems more fanciful than real.

In his imaginary dialogue on *The Democratic Vista* (1958), Richard Chase has one of his speakers (a professor of English who talks very much as though he'd memorized Chase's other books) discuss the American years from 1912 to the present. The time from 1912 to 1918 was a "resurgence," a truly promising period; but its promise was lost in the general crackup of the postwar years: "The impact of the First World War fragmented and dispersed the Resurgence into the brilliant but unstable performances of the writers and artists of the 1920's. . . ." This is one way of viewing the decade; it is certainly

true that most of the achievements of the 1920s had their sources in earlier decades—some of them much earlier than the time Chase so much admires.

If we examine these sources more closely, we may more properly appreciate the “temper of the Twenties.” It seems to me that the late years of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th contained two major components of the Twenties spirit: the apparently substantial moral and economic structures of an established society; and detailed and systematic description of the skeptical means of destruction and rebellion. We needed only a convincing demonstration of the weaknesses that underlay society; this demonstration occurred in the War of 1914–1918. The skepticism and the rebellion survived the war, but the “enemy” did not. Mr. R. P. Blackmur once spoke (in a lecture at the Library of Congress) of “that explosion of talent” that occurred from 1922 to 1925, and suggested that all of the great works of those years “came deeply from the bourgeois humanist tradition” of the past. The great artists of the 1920s are truly descendants of the “bourgeois humanist tradition,” but they are also rebels against it, the consequence of a surviving and triumphant skepticism.

It is at least in part a matter of generations. Thomas Mann’s *Buddenbrooks* (1901) speaks brilliantly of the passing of the solid, capable, God-fearing generations of Protestant businessmen, and of their being menaced by the doubts and rejections of the newer generations. The later Buddenbrooks are haunted by thoughts of nihilism and death; the 20th century threatens the 19th, as the Buddenbrook dynasty moves toward its awkward and clumsy collapse. This history, of generations in decline, is repeated again and again in the literature of the prewar years. The truth is that the *forms* of that society, so zealously and proudly guarded, were vulnerable; and the War, for all its having been justified in humanist terms, proved literally too much for its survival. The liberal, “genteel,” bourgeois humanism was judged literally to be inadequate to the stresses and strains of modern violence.

The intellectual world of 1912–1918, of which Chase speaks so fondly, was neither strong nor precise in its formulations. It was a liberal world, held together by liberal imaginings and expectations. The men and women who lived in it were immensely good-willed but often naïve. The writers of the 1920s found their speculations quite thoroughly inadequate. Inadvisedly, they were held accountable for

the disastrously wide chasm that opened in the War years between moral securities and social chaos. Most important of all, the moral and philosophical structures of the earlier society collapsed in the destructive blasts of the war. We were left, in 1920, with many minds and talents of great promise, who had both the glory and the responsibility of a radical individualism. But this was not the individualism of the Emersonian self, or even of the more cautiously hedged self-definition that Whitman offered at the end of the 19th century.

The "temper" of the Twenties was in this way historically caused. It was experimental, improvisatory, skeptical, and free. The literary achievements of the decade were marked by an immense self-esteem and egotism. Most of all, they were produced by men and women who — perhaps for the first time in our history — were convinced of the value of aesthetic discourse in and of itself. Each of the great works which the decade offered is in its own way an experimental departure from its predecessors. Each demonstrates the advantages of an aesthetic and a moral release from 19th century constraints. In each case, the forces of rebellion contained in the earlier century are brought forward and become the major incentives of the creative life.

If I were asked to characterize quickly the literary consequences of that life, I should say they were rather like these: an audacious confidence in individual perceptions; a comic self-consciousness with respect to a once formidable but now rather ludicrous "enemy"; ideological and philosophical flexibility; an ease and an informality of discourse; and an impulsive desire to seek out the "new" in all imaginable areas of literature and life. All of this is of course unconventional, and in a special sense it is also unpolitical. But it was not superficial or without character; it may even be called "profound," though it was surely not pompous. The history of the 1920s is a most convincing demonstration of the value of an *avant garde* in a democratic society. Chase says of the phenomenon of the *avant garde*, that "In its critical function it is wherever anyone is trying to give a true account of the history and nature of our civilization." Members of the *avant garde* are engaged — in their major and their most serious occupations — in reformulations of principles and forms that their own skepticism has made necessary.

I should like to bring all of these essays in definition down to two principal ideas, or intellectual "conceits": these may be called the

move toward *secularization* and the fundamental uses of *innocence*. As for the first, I should say that it is a necessary consequence of religious and moral collapse. The spirit does not disappear, or even weaken, but it needs a new language and new aesthetic adaptations. In a condition that is secular instead of traditionally "religious," the metaphors and symbols of religion are reexamined, and the *psychology* of the self redefined. Many of our major works are attempts to redefine a state of grace, or to portray the great difficulty of achieving one. But secularization is more than merely an account of the decline of past religious conventions. More significantly, it is a redistribution of the major metaphors of our lives, an attempt to give them new uses and new meanings.

The principal impetus of Joyce's *Ulysses* is this felt need of a recasting of accounts and balances. It appears at first sight a scramble of both forms and beliefs, but it is essentially Joyce's essay in the redirection and redistribution of all basic metaphors of the human condition. At times the effect is downright blasphemous, as in the opening scene, in which "Stately, plump Buck Mulligan" appears on the stairway, in a mockery of religious ceremony, intoning "*Introibo ad Altare Dei*." But the total effect is less profane; it is a linking of pagan and Jewish rituals and meditations with the Christian, to the persistent accompaniment of a brilliant adaptation of the Homeric analogy to quotidian and commonplace concerns. As in almost all other products of the 1920s, the object is not to destroy the religious substrata of human values but to redistribute the terms in which they had previously been stated and defined.

A host of other examples are available. Many of these are directly associated with the atmosphere of the War. In that War there were many Christs; one may almost say that Christ is assumed universally as the hero-victim of the War's circumstances. E. E. Cummings, on his way to *The Enormous Room* (1922), comes upon the wooden figure of such a Christ:

The wooden body clumsy with pain burst into fragile legs
with absurdly large feet and funny writhing toes; its little
stiff arms made abrupt, cruel, equal angles with the road.
. . . There was in this complete silent doll a gruesome truth
of instinct, a success of uncanny poignancy, an unearthly
ferocity of rectangular emotion.

The suffering is there, but it has become grotesque and indefinable. It is no longer easily explainable along theological lines, but must be associated with a secular *situation*. The great consequence of secularization is the effort to make language and imagery correspond to the human circumstances to which they refer.

Another important characteristic of the literary Twenties has to do with the improvisation of language and manners. Despite the superficial gaiety and ease of the decade, its major literary scenes were often grim and forbidding. The pressure upon the individual was formidable. Literary heroes feel it intensely, and their behavior is often acutely melancholy. The final impact of Fitzgerald's *Gatsby* is a disaster. He is left alone at the end, as he was ignored throughout his lifetime. The energy of his romantic affirmation has no real or valid context. He becomes, in Nick Carraway's words, a "son of God — a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that — and he must be about His Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty." Into these remarks Fitzgerald concentrates a wealth of criticism, which reaches far into the decade's skeptical disapproval of the Bruce Barton images of "Salvation and Five Per Cent." Most of the significant protagonists of this literature suffer a comparable distress of misplaced or dislocated affection and drive.

Neither the major forms nor the established manners of the past sufficed. Fitzgerald flaunted his eccentric manners in Manhattan and in its French suburbs. Mrs. Wharton's neat manneristic discourses upon the decline of moral proprieties disintegrated in the Twenties into feeble comedies of bad manners. The major weapons of criticism in the decade were satire and parody. These were all addressed to the task of proving that conventional practices were ludicrous. The principal areas of critical discourse were psychoanalysis and the Nietzschean rebellion. Freud provided the tools of analysis for the examination of what Nietzsche had described as the consequences of God's death.

All of this, temporarily at least, added up to an extraordinary egotism, a self-esteem of great force which had erratic results. Each major work of literature was unique and *sui generis*. For the first time, perhaps, in modern civilization, all patterns of society and tradition were subjected to fresh, original and outrageous scrutiny. Fundamental impulses concerning "right action" offered strange perspec-

tives upon the past. Only the most original of experiments could emerge from this initial impetus. Blackmur remarks upon the literature of this time that "where the great novelists of our times have dealt with the troubles caused by the new knowledges (and the erosion of some of the old ones) in a kind of broad and irregular psychology, so the poets have been led to deal with them . . . in a kind of irregular and spasmodic, but vitalized metaphysics."

The "irregular metaphysics" was freshly inspired by a conscious trust in the validity of irrational or unaccustomed insights. The major poetic strategies were a consequence of the deliberate exploration of the discrete, specific object or event in personal experience and of the attempt to prove that poetry was informed by a special power of language and meaning. All of this intense critical activity is the obverse of the examination of manners and the past. It is in the line of progress for the discovery of secular values to take the place of fixed religious ones. In such poets as Wallace Stevens, theology is redefined in terms of ontology and epistemology. The beginnings of the modern interest in archetypes, which tended to consider all religions and cultures as variants of one, correspondingly left the burden of moral definition to the individual poet. This is a condition in which a willed transcendence of the actual served to move self above the level of the real. There are infinite varieties of definition as a result. The symbolic orders of our long poems are forced and deliberately introspective. They are ingenious orderings of special insights, and their formal eccentricities immensely advanced the range of literary definition.

The levels of literature in the 1920s are as various as the levels of thought. Each of them defines precisely an individual's special recourse to knowledges, of both technique and metaphysics. It moves objectively to an introspective center. Each artist seems a Hans Castorp, set upon and fought over by a host of authorities on physical and metaphysical disease. Castorp seems a *true* image of modern man, a man on whom nothing is wasted, but who initiates nothing. The form defines the special qualities of his determination to explain the *malaise* of his time, as well as to point toward its cure. A common pressure is that of the depersonalizing force of organized knowledges upon the individual force of protest and belief.

What I have called the "uses of innocence" in the Twenties are in

fact necessary revisions of experience. For obvious reasons, the attention of the Twenties was directed to present time. The greatest innocence conceives a present deprived of its past. Men discussed either the necessity of the present or the futility of attempting to escape from it. Major experiments in literature, from Stein to Faulkner, are explorations of the interrelationship of past and present, or carefully worked out strategies for representing the present condition and status of "the thing seen." The object and rhythm of life are freed of responsibility to abstractions. This was a peculiar form of innocent awareness, which was directly related to the driving need for fresh definition. Innocence takes two principal forms in the decade: an intense preoccupation with the immediate present, and the sense of dissociation from larger or deeper orders of experience.

As for the first, it led to many expressions of "arrogant eccentricity," of self-centered folly. Nevertheless, from a multitude of eccentric practices have come most of our best respected modern literary traditions. If it were not for *Life* magazine and such journalists as Frederick Lewis Allen, the frivolities would long since have been forgotten. As I have said in *The Twenties*, the love of free and innocent intellectual maneuvering was immensely useful, in the manner of its removing stale cultural rubbish and establishing new forms of expression: "They were truly, recklessly, innocently, rawly, tenaciously naive. . . . But the best of them were from the beginning, and remained, endowed with talent, with reserves of irony, satire, and intelligent respect for the 'right word.' The best of them preserved in their work the exact *rapprochement* of experience with the act of experiencing, of action with the moral comedy of man acting."

The second of these characteristics of innocence is more difficult to fit into the pattern of our history. The very fact of dissociation was distressing. Eliot tried to narrow the feeling to an agony of disbelief or moral sloth, and he succeeded in convincing most of his contemporaries that a recovery of Christian asceticism was the sole means of salvation. But the problem of dissociation was analyzed in many other ways. The strongest of these was an enforced irrational mysticism, defined in terms of the special aesthetic values of the decade. It is true, as Chase has said, that this struggle for an aesthetic reordering of faith was very hard on the liberal tradition, and that the Twenties in consequence have the appearance of a brilliant but unstable per-

formance. But the very exaggeration of its eccentricity forced upon the consciousness and conscience of modern man a sense of the need for frequent review of the tactics used for moral survival. Surely the all but purely doctrinal and editorial emphasis of the 1930s led to a major ideological disaster in the violence of the Spanish Civil War and the events of the early 1940s.

The significance of the Twenties for our century is a profound one; we have come back ever since 1930 to the truth of its initial and initiating premise, that no world-system is ever entirely fixed or immune from moral revision. The events of the decade have surely emphasized a salient truth, that a paradise of pure reason is beyond our reach and that the effort to impose one leads to many stresses and agonies. Beyond this, the Twenties have re-enforced our conviction of the value of the nonconformist, the aberrant, erratic self, the *avant garde* of the human personality who may not always have the right answers but sees to it that the established ones don't enjoy an undeserved long life.

I should like to summarize the meaning of the decade, its apparent *advantages* over our own. First, one may generally concede to it a free, casual intimacy of intellectual and aesthetic exchange. There was generally a willingness to allow for "intellectual waste"; waste or a margin of error was not then so disastrous to contemplate. Further, social balances were more helpfully maintained by a shrewd sense of ridiculous and harmful extremes of idiocy. A remarkable, graceful, and useful flexibility in matters of human judgment was an immense advantage. All of these qualities contributed to the successful career of 1920's intellectual life, in its sustaining a "poetic," critical, ironic, and complex vision of the human condition.

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RANDOM THOUGHTS ON THE 1920's

(Author's Note: *This paper was given as an extemporaneous talk without notes or other preparation. It is an entirely personal reminiscence of the author's small part in the literary life of the Twenties. Since it seemed to him improper to do research on himself, Mr. William Van O'Connor, chairman of the lectures on the Twenties, consented, perhaps with some misgivings, to let him talk off the top of his head.*)

I HAVE frequently cited the observation of the English poet Abraham Cowley that the period of the English Civil Wars was a good age to write about but a poor age to write in. It seems to me that the 1920's were a little like that. Much is being written about the 1920's. So it has become a period for historical research and investigation of one kind or another. The 1920's are very lively today — everybody is talking about the 1920's. We have certain major figures around whom the discussion centers — people like Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway — but to have been alive and old enough to participate in the 1920's means that one has a slightly different view of them from that of, say, Mr. Arthur Mizener, who came to consciousness in the 1930's. The 1920's produced a dozen, or say fifteen, first-rate novelists and poets, but it was enormously difficult to live then, and not entirely pleasant. Some years ago Mr. Edmund Wilson wrote an article in *The New Yorker* in which he said that in the 1920's people stayed up later, drank more and made more love than they had before or have done since. That was not my impression of it at all. It seemed to me then just about the same as today, from that point of view.

Certain more serious considerations I shall not be able to go into as thoroughly as I should wish. For example, if we agree that it was

economically a difficult age to be writing in, and that without such difficulties the large number of good writers might not have emerged, we shall also have to acknowledge the advantages. From about 1918 to the stock-market crash in 1929 there was a common atmosphere of excitement and discovery: we were convinced that we were *discovering* something. We were faced with what Baudelaire called *l'Inconnu*, and we were with Pound in the belief that we were Making It New. In the fifteen years since the end of the second World War, the going has been getting easier for writers; grants, fellowships, and subsidies, to say nothing of teaching jobs, make this present period one which it is at least superficially easy to write *in*. Is it easy to write *about*? That's a different question. If the comparative ease of making a living seems to a man of my generation to have taken the edge off the alertness of the younger novelists and poets, it may not be entirely their fault. So I confess I can't tell whether it's the age, or whether it's the fault of the new postwar generation, or my own disengagement, which leads me to suspect that it's a good age to write *in*. So I ask indulgence for a few paradoxes that may do less than justice to what I am trying to say.

The younger poets are highly accomplished. The good second-rate poets today are better than the first-rate poets of my generation, if you will allow the paradox; I don't quite mean it, but you see what I do mean. Most of them are writing a "period style." There are many novelists who know as much about the writing of novels as Ernest Hemingway but nobody is as good as he is. I think some of his excellence was due largely to the external difficulties that everybody faced in that time.

Now to go back a little and give you a kind of chronological account of my observations of that period. I believe the scholars call it a "period." In 1921 I was twenty-one years old and an undergraduate at Vanderbilt University, an institution which I believe has been heard of in this part of the country only through its football teams. I was already living in the 1920's but I didn't know it. We didn't know it was the 1920's. It was merely the third decade of the century. In that year, while I was still an undergraduate, I began to go to meetings of a group of professors and citizens of Nashville, Tennessee, and we discussed a lot of different authors—chiefly poets and philosophers. Some members of the group were good classical

scholars and some were poets, and pretty soon we began to bring poems to the meetings. We read them to one another, and that is how the Fugitive group started. Our teacher — the teacher of most of us in the Department of English — was John Crowe Ransom. But there was no course in Creative Writing. We never heard of Creative Writing. If the phrase had been used we would have been astonished. Creative Writing? What does it mean? There is only writing, good and bad. Mr. Ransom taught a course in Advanced Composition, which I took as a sophomore. He was not in the least interested in whether I was creative. I had had some reading in the classics and knew a little of Roman and Greek drama, but what Mr. Ransom was interested in was my rhetoric — in *correcting* my rhetoric. What I was saying seemed to leave him a little cold. Nobody at Vanderbilt University ever encouraged anybody to be a poet. This also was completely unheard of.

I remember in the spring of 1922, when we decided to publish the first issue of our little magazine — a very daring project — I was delegated, as the only undergraduate member of the group at that time, to go to the Chancellor of the University, James H. Kirkland, to ask him for the modest subscription of one dollar for four issues of *The Fugitive*. The Chancellor was a great and brilliant man. It was he who, more than any other man, put Southern education on its feet again after the Reconstruction and raised the standards. But he was a sceptical old gentleman, and he clicked his false teeth and said, "Mr. Tate, how do I know that you will deliver the three other issues?" And he declined to subscribe. I think he was quite sensible. I'm making the point, I suppose, that without opposition or indifference, we probably shouldn't have been able to flourish. I don't think it is chauvinistic exaggeration to say that this magazine, *The Fugitive*, has since become one of the most famous of our century. This is not merely subjective opinion. It has been confirmed in many articles and in several books written about us — one of them, called *The Fugitives*, by Mr. John Bradbury, a critical work of great ability; another, *The Fugitive Group* by Louise Cowan, more a history of the group than a critical work. It is strange to read about oneself in such works. Some years ago a young lady at the University of Wisconsin did me the honor of writing a dissertation all about me. Just about me! I read it with great interest, as you may imagine.

After I had got about three-fourths of the way through it, it suddenly occurred to me that all the verbs were in the past tense.

Why did this little magazine become famous? It's hard to answer this question. There were hundreds of amateur literary groups in this country after the first World War, just as there are today. Some of our critics have said it was the peculiar situation of the South at that time which made our group possible, and there is no doubt that our group was one phase of a larger literary revival which has since come to be known as the Southern Literary Renaissance. It was happening all over the place, but we didn't know it at the time. There was a little magazine in New Orleans called *The Double Dealer*; there was one in Richmond called *The Reviewer*; and they were extremely good. And at that same time—the early Twenties—William Faulkner was beginning to write, and Katherine Anne Porter was already writing.

Other commentators on our group believe that the felt predicament of the South—the critical situation of the Southern mind at that time—had very little to do with the arrival of our group or any other group, but particularly of ours. These people hold that it was only the superior talents of a group brought accidentally together that can explain us. In this group, as you probably know, were John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, Merrill Moore, and Donald Davidson, and a few years later Cleanth Brooks and Andrew Lytle. There is truth, I think in both theories. A culture can't produce a writer if he hasn't got what it takes. But I daresay that the most gifted writer can do very little unless he appears at a favorable moment historically. What was happening in the South was only happening more dramatically there than elsewhere throughout the country. A vast change, the result of the first World War, was taking place all over America. The nineteenth century was at an end. And the shock of this realization affected every writer of the 1920's whether he was aware or not of what the change meant historically. The change affected the imaginative writer at his nerve-ends. He began to see the world differently. His very sensibility was altered.

The Fugitive ceased publication in 1925 after three years of life. I suppose it was the only little magazine of the sort which did not suspend publication for lack of funds. I boast of that because it is generally supposed that American communities, and particularly

Southern communities, are so Philistine that they will do nothing for local talent. There was a group of businessmen in Nashville called the "Associated Retailers" who subsidized us for several years. We gave up the magazine merely because everybody was tired of it, and no magazine can be edited forever. It is generally supposed that the utmost span of usefulness for a literary magazine is about seven years. I think we stopped in good time — three years before the thing could have begun to run out.

A year before 1925 I went to New York and took my chances as a freelance writer, making my living as a sub-editor of a pulp magazine. Most of the young men of my age were doing something similar. This pulp magazine was called *Telling Tales*, and it was a competitor of a magazine of that period called *Snappy Stories*. They were "sexy" magazines but if you were to go back and look them up now, they would seem quite all right. They could be put on the library table with the *Atlantic Monthly*.

One of the first people I met in New York was Malcolm Cowley, and I soon met the late Hart Crane, Matthew Josephson, Edmund Wilson, Kenneth Burke, the late Phelps Putnam, John Peale Bishop, Katherine Anne Porter, E. E. Cummings, Léonie Adams and Louise Bogan. It sounds like a conductor calling the railway stations, doesn't it? Well, all these "young" people played a great role in the 1920's, and they had staying power, for they are still in top form. Of the people I've named only three are not with us — Crane committed suicide in 1932, Bishop died in 1944, and Putnam in 1948. It has been reported to me that Mr. Cowley said the writers of the Twenties were devoted and dedicated, and I think that's true. But the *kind* of devotion and dedication is what we have to bear in mind. It will be a little hard to describe it, just how we were dedicated. I think necessity had a lot to do with it. We lived from hand to mouth, and though we didn't like it, it never occurred to us that we could live any other way and still do, not merely what we wanted to do, but what we were convinced we *had* to do. So I'm not sure whether it was on account of dedication or on account of necessity.

I remember that, two or three years before Crane killed himself, *Fortune Magazine* asked him to write an article. He had great difficulty making a living, so he tried to write the article but he couldn't. He had genius but no competence and his very incompe-

tence saved him. I think most of us have had experiences like that. When I was graduated from college I was given a job in the coal business of my family in Kentucky. After six months I was fired. I had shipped three cars of coal to Duluth, Minnesota, which should have gone to Cleveland, Ohio. And my brother fired me because, he said, "If I keep you here the other people in the office will accuse me of nepotism." That was my one experience in business — incompetence. The present post-war generation, that is from 1945 to the present, is restless; and if they don't get an academic job before they are twenty-five and a Ford grant before the age of thirty they feel neglected. Since I am citing my own case, I may remark that I was thirty-five and had published five books when I got my first teaching job. Until I was 51 I had only one grant, a Guggenheim Fellowship which the late Ford Madox Ford got me in 1927.

It was this Guggenheim Fellowship that made all the difference to me; and most of my friends had similar experiences — either Guggenheim Fellowships or small grants of some kind. But there were no teaching jobs. No poets were "in residence" in those days — not even Robert Frost. In those days the Guggenheim Foundation made us go to Europe, no doubt to broaden our minds, so I went to England and France. Our generation thought England a little tiresome, so Paris was the place — and that's where we went. It was a little like Brigham Young seeing the desert: *This Is the Place*. This was the place we were heading for — our spiritual home. I had come from a small provincial university, a university which nevertheless provided the world view which a classical education makes possible; I was now, at the end of the Twenties, suddenly plunged into the world of the expatriates.

I shall have to invoke some names, and I'll have to run the risk of your invidious reflections. When I arrived in Paris in 1928 some of the old friends of the New York period were there — among them, Ford Madox Ford and John Peale Bishop. Ford had come to the United States — he had made many visits before — but when he came in 1925, just after he had published one of his great novels, *Some Do Not*, I had the privilege of meeting him: we became friends and remained friends until his death fourteen years later. Through Ford and Bishop I became a member of a clique. Americans abroad always get together. They might as well be in Harlem, or Minneapolis, be-

cause they all get together and don't see anybody else. It's like living in a small town. Everybody knows what everybody else is doing. By the next fall, the fall of 1929, I was going every Sunday to the bicycle races at the Velodrome d'Hiver with Ernest Hemingway. I never thought I'd like a bicycle race, but he had the gift of imparting enthusiasm for anything that he was enthusiastic about. I wish I had gone to bullfights with him. It would have been much the same thing, I'm sure. And almost every Sunday night I went to the Boeuf sur le Toit with the Fitzgeralds. They had to make "appearances." It was a kind of social obligation. And almost every night I was at the Café des Deux Magots because it was my duty to attend the Master, Ford Madox Ford, who had to play Russian Banquet at least three hours every evening and drink four brandies before he could go to sleep.

Ford was one of the great men of the Twenties. He had had a great literary career before the Twenties but he came into his own at that time. He had been born in London in 1873 with a formidable and rather suffocating background to deal with. He was the son of old Dr. Hueffer, an Alsatian who had come to London as the music critic on the *Times* and had married the daughter of the pre-Raphaelite painter, Ford Madox Brown. Algernon Charles Swinburne was Ford's godfather, his uncle was William Michael Rossetti, and a more impossible background a poet-novelist could scarcely have. Ford told me that up until the time he was twelve years old he had to wear one purple stocking to show that he was a pre-Raphaelite. But there were certain advantages in this background, and Ford acquired an immense literary culture—through the pores of his skin, so to speak. When I knew him he was a man in his fifties. He was the last great European man of letters. They don't produce them anymore—anywhere. He knew everything, Latin and Greek literature, French literature, Italian and German. He was tri-lingual—English, German, and French, and read Italian. When his perhaps greatest novel, *The Good Soldier*, was brought up for translation into French in the late 1920's, the publisher asked Ford to suggest a suitable translator. Ford said, yes, I'll find one. Six weeks or two months later, Ford produced the manuscript. He had rewritten the novel in French himself without referring to the English text. If you compare the two versions, the English and the French, they are sentence-by-

sentence identical.

Ford was not only a great writer. He was a great teacher. He believed in literature, in its dignity and value to civilization; he spent hours encouraging young writers and helping them—not merely encouraging them but going over their manuscripts, and getting them published. I could name dozens of writers from Ernest Hemingway to Katherine Anne Porter whom he helped. He helped me a great deal and I'm still grateful to him. He was also, of course, a great editor. In 1908 he founded *The English Review*—he used to say, rather plaintively, to publish a poem of Thomas Hardy's that nobody else would publish. People like Wyndham Lewis and D. H. Lawrence were first brought to the public through Ford, and he was one of the first editors of Ezra Pound. He was at the center of international literary life for some thirty years.

At that particular time, 1928 to 1930, either in Paris or in London, I met certain other people who became lifelong friends—T. S. Eliot, Herbert Read, Mario Praz, and Valéry Larbaud; and very much in the foreground at that time in the literary life of Paris was the dedicated woman, Sylvia Beach, who ran the famous book shop in the Rue de l'Odéon. Without Miss Beach, Joyce's *Ulysses* might have had to wait many years for publication, and it is conceivable that it might never have been published at all. Sylvia Beach introduced me to Ernest Hemingway.

At that time, also in Paris, at the height of her power, was Miss Gertrude Stein. When I arrived in Paris in 1928, I began receiving orders from Ford. Of course I took orders from him—I stepped around for him, as I should have done. I had a strong feeling, that seems to have disappeared among young writers today, that I was the apprentice and he the master. As long as I knew him, and as closely and well as I knew him, that relation never changed, and it should not have changed; so when Ford gave me orders to do something I did it—I stepped. Evidently there had been some collusion about this matter because in a few days I received a card from Miss Stein which was also a command. It didn't say, Will you come to tea on Thursday? It said, You *will* come to tea next Thursday. Well, I jumped to attention and I went to tea next Thursday.

I went frequently to the apartment at 27 Rue de Fleurus. It was only a couple of blocks from where I lived. The walls of the *salon*

were almost completely covered with Picassos. As you entered the room on the right there was a little *daïs* where Miss Stein sat, her visitors sitting slightly below. The ladies who might be present or who were coming in with us were whisked off to the back of the room where Miss Alice B. Toklas had a wonderful American chocolate cake. I never got any of it because I was always kept in the front of the room, at Miss Stein's feet. That went on for some months, in fact for nearly a year.

One day Ernest Hemingway came to the little *pension* where I was living and he said, "Gertrude has taken me back into favor." She hadn't spoken to him for some time. He said, "She's taken me back into favor but I'm scared to go and see her alone. Won't you come along?" Well, I saw no reason why I shouldn't and so I agreed to go. By that evening Mr. Hemingway had assembled a party of friends. There were the Fitzgeralds and the Bishops and maybe one or two other persons. As usual the gentlemen were standing off to the right and the ladies in the rear and Miss Stein proceeded to give us a lecture: nothing less than a kind of synopsis of the history of American literature from Emerson to about 1930. Emerson was the great fore-runner because he had a genius for abstraction. He was not particularly concerned with experience. Hawthorne was practically impossible because he was still European. Emily Dickinson was fairly good. Whitman was on the right track. Henry James was really awfully good because the design of his novels showed a genius for abstract construction; but alas, Henry James was also partly European. He was bogged down in "experience." The climax, of course, of the lecture on American literature was that Miss Stein was the climax. The genius for abstraction had finally realized itself in her.

I'm awfully sorry. You see, I didn't really like Miss Stein and I have never been able to read her works with either pleasure or edification. During the course of this lecture Miss Stein paused for a moment, and, reacting like a little boy, I thought it would be embarrassing if there was a silence. I thought it would be polite to say something—and I've forgotten what I said. It was just a brief remark, and Miss Stein evidently thought I was contradicting her because she looked at me and said, "Nonsense, my dear Tate. Nonsense!" How true it was.

At last the evening came to an end and we left and walked up the

Rue de Fleurus into the Rue Guynemer by the Luxembourg Garden. It was a beautiful autumn evening. It had just rained and the air was fresh. Scott Fitzgerald walked on a little ahead, and I heard him say, "I've seen Shelley plain."

That brings me, I think, to the only serious part of my talk. In all the discussion of the 1920's the glamor—or the *glamour*, I believe the ladies' fashion magazines call it—seems to me irrelevant. If you will think for a moment of Fitzgerald and of Hemingway, we had in both those men, as different as they were, a peculiar fusion of great capacity to respond to experience, even a kind of naïveté, along with a profound skepticism and certain powers of critical observation which make the great novelist. Fitzgerald had it pre-eminently. If a stranger met him somewhere on a train or in a café, the stranger might have thought that Fitzgerald was a case of arrested development because his conversation was so silly. But there was great cunning in it. He was always drawing you out to see what you would say. I remember the first time I met him. It was at a dinner party in Paris given by the John Peale Bishops, and I was a little late. When I walked in and was introduced, he said, "Do you enjoy making love?" and I said, "It's none of your damn business." I told Bishop about this later in the evening, and he said, "Well, no matter what answer you give him you are convicted. It's heads I win, tails you lose. Fitzgerald asks everybody that, and he's not interested in your answer. He's watching you very closely—the expression on your face—to see how you deal with a disconcerting situation." His mind worked that way. Bishop used to say that "the man in the top hat"—Scott Fitzgerald was obsessed by the American millionaire and he spoke of American millionaires as "our feudal families"—Bishop said that "the man in the top hat" was "Scott's cowboys and Indians." This sounds childish, but back of it were a critical eye, great insight, and great moral passion.

Now what brought this about? Partly Fitzgerald's genius—partly the 1920's. Not the *glamour* of the 1920's, but the fact that the first World War had brought about a profound change in America. People were shocked out of their complacency. New powers of observation were stimulated, or even created, in people. This is illustrated, too, in Hemingway. His cult of violence, of the primitive, of the simple-minded extrovert, is not so simple as it seems. He has a

mind of great subtlety and enormous powers of selective observation. A much greater stylist than Fitzgerald, his range is much more limited than Fitzgerald's. He has a few compulsive subjects that he repeats over and over again, and until recently he's always brought something fresh to bear upon them. I can't think that the cult of experience since his time has produced anything of comparable merit. The cult of experience since the recent war has ended with the Beatniks—people who believe in raw experience and the rejection of intelligence. A part of Hemmingway's myth is that intelligence doesn't count; but he brings a first-rate intelligence to bear upon that very theme. He's one of the most intelligent men I've ever known and one of the best-read. The cult of experience has come to a dead end in our time, and Hemmingway is not in the least responsible for it.

It was shortly before I went to Paris, I think, that Gertrude Stein made the famous remark to Ernest Hemingway, or perhaps Scott Fitzgerald—I will never know which because I refuse to read anything about this period, I rely entirely on what I remember—"You are all a lost generation." What nonsense *that* was! That is precisely what they were not. The writers of the Twenties were not a *lost* generation. They may have liked to be told that. But it was not what they were at all. No generation was lost that could produce with the devotion and dedication—I come back to Mr. Cowley's words and I think they are accurate—could produce with devotion and dedication the work that these young men had produced even as early as 1930. At that time Hemingway had published *The Sun Also Rises*, *In Our Time* and *A Farewell to Arms*. He had almost finished *Death in the Afternoon*. Fitzgerald had published *This Side of Paradise*, *The Great Gatsby* and he'd just about finished *Tender Is the Night* besides a great number of brilliant short stories. Ernest Hemingway in those days went to bed at nine o'clock and was up at six to work. When he was writing *A Farewell to Arms* he wrote the first paragraph over one hundred times to get it right. People who were living the "glamorous" life of the Twenties couldn't have worked that way. And no generation is "lost" which could. Everybody I knew was working all the time. And I suppose one reason why I know so little about the Twenties is that I was working most of the time, too.

isabella gardner

A Loud Song, Mother

MY SON is five years old and tonight he sang this song to me
He said, it's a loud song, Mother, block up your ears a little, he
said wait I must get my voice ready first. Then tunelessly
but with a bursting beat he chanted from his room enormously,

strangers in my name
strangers all around me
strangers running toward me
strangers all over the world
strangers running on stars

A deafening declaration this jubilant shout of grief
that trumpets final fellowship and flutes a whole belief.
Alone and in the dark he clears his throat to yawp his truth
that each living human creature's name is Ruth.
He sings a world of strangers running on the burning stars
a race on every-colored feet with freshly calloused scars.

Our stark still strangers waited back of doors and under beds
their socket eyes stared at us out of closets; in our heads.
We crawled on hob-nailed knees across our wasted starless land
each smugly thinking his the only face that wore a brand.

Sons, may you starve the maggot fears that ate our spirit's meat
and stride with brother strangers in your seven league bare feet.

The Man of Faith

The man of faith has fled the cross
And guilt becomes his albatross.
The politician's pity spends
No coin of mercy on his friends,
Old men devise new ways to die,
Let Icarus engage the sky.
Abraham's sacrifice is made —
The ewe lamb by the ram betrayed.
Though fear of love turn blood to ice,
I too have heard the cock crow thrice.

The Searchlight

from an anti-aircraft battery

In smug delight we swaggered through the park
and arrogant pressed arm and knee and thigh.
We could not see the others in the dark.
We stopped and peered up at the moonless sky
and at grey bushes and the bristling grass
You in your Sunday suit, I in my pleated gown,
deliberately we stooped (brim-full of grace,
each brandied each rare-steaked) and laid us down.

We lay together in that urban grove
an ocean from the men engaged to die.
As we embraced a distant armoured eye
aroused our dusk with purposed light, a grave
rehearsal for another night. The field
bloomed lovers, dined and blind and target-heeled.

william carlos williams

Fragment:

As FOR him who
finds fault
may silliness

and sorrow
overtake him
when you wrote

you did not
know
the power of

your words

parm mayer

Hunting Song

Sung in a Wet Woods with Cold Feet

Part 1. (before the kill)

Back To A Pine Stump

Look to the deer, hunter —
nose to ground;
heart, hunting-knifed on hip;
gun, loaded with what is left
from cold drip of caves.

Nothing is more than the kill;
nothing adds up to more
than one insolvable subtraction.

Look, too, into the dazed dark blue;
cut the beseeching throat;
dump bowels on ground.

I said,
Nothing is more than the kill.
What I mean is,
unless you are a man
and lay there on the ground
and the hardened horn stood
pointing at your heart.

Part II. (the kill)

Bead At The End Of A Gun Barrel

Shoot me quick
and get it past the hour.
Here, between the eyes,
nor spoil meat nor hide.

Word from a small brass bead
centered between the look in the eyes
and the bull's eye of eternity:
Pull trigger, pull.
That's what you bought this 30-30 for,
isn't it?

Or was I finding out for myself?
Nothing left in the coffin, now,
but to let the trigger pull.

There was the eruption.
And there stood a soul
(more soul than I'd ever seen)
with set of horns to head.

Didn't I learn to kill you?
You couldn't, the first time.
I'm *your* soul.

There was the wet ground.
And there I was, synopsised and still,
with something like life-flow
fleeing out of the hole
between what they said was my eyes.
My ears were far away
but not too far under to hear
the coroner pronounce

my soul was gone.
Maybe it was not as hopeless
as it first seemed.
Maybe I missed.
Maybe the soul and the 30-30 hole
were not there
the day the wet leaves
bled into the dying ground.

Then what was this Super-X,
expelled of lubaloy,
doing in my hand.

Part III. (after the kill)

You gut him out, they said,
and handed me the knife.
Who tested the thin line,
pressed so along thumb,
stalling to walk to the tree,
to the limb, to the likeness.

No doubt it hung by its horns
from a dead-leafed oak gallows—
neck stretched to see another world ;
hind legs stiffened to protest
the revised code ;
front legs angled to climb another hill.

Ultimately the focused point,
reluctant against belly hair.
The push into the dark ; and beyond.
Into the still-warm sag
and the swinging heaviness.

To show them I wasn't chicken,
I turned on the car lights ;
took off red coat ; put on ceremony ;

parted shirt and quilted undersuit ;
played hari-kari for a longer while
than they could see.

Remember, Big John from Iron Mountain,
your underbelly is as soft and as warm
as Diana's and mine.
And even a beer barrel hurts
when Duroc staves it in with an axe.

The bell rang between the log walls
and inside the clotted skull.
I jumped seven feet into the cold drizzle
of another day on top the wet leaves.
Under the blanket, it was still warm
where the deer and I had lain.

I sang without gunplay:
Deer hunting is a salient proclivity.
And Big John shouted:
And a hellavalotta fun !

morgan blum

Harelipped Johnny's Song

*I am become as it were a monster
unto many . . . (from The Book of Common
Prayer's translation of Psalm LXXI:
In te, Domine, speravi)*

LET HER be tall or short or fat
Or lean as Jack the Ripper's cat,
Let her be prostitute or maid —
Enticements all that man can spare
Just so the wench is forced to wear
Thick glasses and a hearing aid.

Blind to the scar I call a lip
And deaf to sounds that blur and slip,
She'll glory in her flawless blade
And love unvexed by sense's doubt:
She'll know me as I am, without
Her glasses and her hearing aid.

And yet she'll wince at my lip's touch
And shudder like a sense-bound bitch.
So I have raised my eyes and prayed
(Gross sense, flawed flesh, each earth-spawned mate
Invites man's magnifying hate,
Thick glasses, and loud hearing aid):

A Virgin with her very breath
Prays for me now ; and at my death
Should I dare look upon this Maid
And lift both heart and eyes above,
She'll gaze on my scarred soul with love,
Thick glasses, and a hearing aid.

At the Prospect of a March Thaw

Slowly, the planet leans away from dark ;
Branched, forked, insistent, out of frost-locked ground
The spring will sprout its bulb, its rising lark,
And all that emblems Time's insurgent round.
Shall not the heart thaw too and thaw the mind,
And we no longer trudge to winter's drum:
Cold buttered love and hot embittered rum ?

See us in August, mismatched things repaired
And summer's drought thin-spotted on the land,
Where, isolate and, like a child, high-chaired,
Each waits the autumn and hill-browning wind,
And feels the mug bead chill against the hand,
The fierce heart sicken at its surfeit of
Cold buttered rum and hot embittered love.

david cornel de jong

WE BOILED MY SON

"I AM trying to be absolutely genuine in my own eyes," she was saying. "I put on a really personal face for this occasion. And you know don't you that during all those years my husband insisted on choosing all my faces. On rising, and still in his flannel pajamas, which he wore winter and summer. On the other hand, I feel oddly maternal, and you ought to resent it. Too many mothers . . ." and she tapped with fingernails which looked as if they'd been colored for eternity. "But what can you expect of a widow?"

He stared at the swimming room, dissolving itself into asparagus ferns, bird claw palms and tinted birds. It wasn't too much sherry either. He was trying to avoid looking at her, her too merry eyes, sly nose, fecund mouth, a forehead resenting ennui, and a chin precariously molded, as if they were all symbols of widowhood. He looked down on his own hands and wanted to see love unfolding there, but kept thinking instead of Rock in flannel pajamas, choosing her faces. Everybody showed too much compassion, he concluded. I have no virtue left for love.

On the other hand she was still talking about her face. "Don't you think I should have chosen a college face, which ought to be the exact opposite of bereavement? And belongs to competitive sport, and hates death? So that I could keep on assuming, and not stridently either, that Rock is completely and consistently dead? So thoroughly dead, that even his bones can't leave any echo?" She paused, to make him become aware. "You know, I take bones seriously."

He wagged his head, and she pecked harder at the fish on her olive green plate, as if it were a sacrament. He wished he could say something smart, but it wouldn't matter. She meant herself to be without humor. Humorlessly he said: "No I suppose I couldn't compete with Rock in any shape or fashion."

"You couldn't and live," she answered, separating the fish from its

own ladder of bones. "You'd start anew."

"I'm trying to see what you mean," he admitted. He said it so humbly that it was like a factual admission that she was drinking far too much; long drinks from Piltzner glasses. The orchestra kept making abstracted replies, self-effacing, a bi-valve music at water edges.

And she was several years younger than he at that, and managed to be unfalteringly realistic. What did she mean then by Rock choosing all her faces on rising in flannel pajamas? Was it expected or not expected of him? It made thoughts on sex importunate, unmalleable, and in thoroughly bad taste he kept thinking of her as well broken-in widow who intended to keep copulating with her dead husband, because bones, especially his bones, were significant.

It became at last imperative that he look among the dusky tables to find his mother. She sat there, eight tables away, gasping with her asthma in the sentimental candlelight. She had warned him that she'd be there. At a distance, she had said, like one of the apostles following the crucifixion from afar. And there she sat, very much available, even if this was no proper place for her. In fact, she looked as if she might have tentatively landed as on a slim branch. Her Vermont conscience sat here, demanding reassurance, even if she had dressed herself like a parody.

But he was even in need of that aspect of her. It gave him sudden courage to put his hand on Karen's, resting momentarily from battle with the fish. She withdraw her hand at once and attacked the fish again, as if to remind him that this was a very special day in her inexorable religion, a religion which yet allowed her latitude to curse God for her widowhood, but never Christ and the virgin. "Not here," she said. "As if she'd given you permission."

It was like being slapped across the nape of the neck with a dead cod. He sat back, rigidly. And as if by special dispensation, his mother came toward their table: lilac suit, lavender scarf, purple baubles on her hat like the eggs of a reptile. She came with an air of passivity, and somehow she managed to purse not only her lips but her entire carriage, and said: "Karen, how are you, dear?"

"Fabulously hungry, as you can see," Karen said, but to him she added: "I see that a clock has struck. Start swimming, Robin, while there's still enough regret left to swim in. And I assume you are

definitely the pisces type."

"You're mistaken, Karen. He's Taurus. Need of home and deep affection," his mother said earnestly. "And he has little need of clocks. And little bells, vesper bells, for instance, always dismayed him. Poor Robin. If it weren't so, I'd be a terrible burden to him. And mine of course, Karen, was a different widowhood."

"So sorry," Karen said. And she looked at him as if she expected him to leave at once. Yet he felt he was leaving her as in martyrdom. "I'll be back in a moment, Karen," he said, but her incredulous eyes denied him. He knew, too, that she'd keep sitting there, watching him and his mother contrive that oddly septic walk together. She'd call it a penultimate walk, type of a walk. Later she might even get up and start looking for him in the garden, where his mother would want to go because of her asthma. "Yet it isn't that I'm asking you to come with me," his mother was saying now. "I could easily manage, unless of course it's really trying to rain at last. I feel as if you'd rather not, for whatever reasons."

He looked back when they were far enough away. Karen at her table seemed to be swimming, swirling then like jetsam and she was earnestly busy eating. His mother touched his arm. "It is raining, and you'd better call me a cab and I'll go home. You could take a stroll around the gardens here. They're so nice, and you don't mind the rain."

It wasn't enough. It was too late. Her attitude was too formal and typical. It wasn't even immediate and unholy, like the woman in the Bible saying in 2 Kings 6: "So we boiled my son, and did eat him." It hurt more.

He eased her into the cab as if she was incredibly precious, and had recently become so. He wanted to obey her fully now and walk in the garden. He expected to find the garden hostile; instead its aura came upon him like an adjuration: Go not too far immediately, Son. Not too soon.

At once he suspected the scene of every insincerity which lurked behind its platitudes. I am forty, he told himself. The accumulation of his years waved back at him in dismissal.

He walked deeper into the garden, and at the next turn in the path he came upon two lean youths, wearing clear yellow rain slickers. They stared hard at him, as if he were swinging a malacca cane per-

haps. He could tell at once that they had been bred for indifference in a post-war generation. Murder would be a whimsy to them. Youth sat upon them stoically. One was a girl: she was double-nubbined beneath her yellow slicker, while the other one was flat. Apart from that bit of topography they were identical, and they even addressed him in unison: "It's raining you know. Where's your umbrella?"

Of course, it was raining, and he felt its wetness like the body of a fish. "It doesn't matter," he said humbly, but the sodden garden was not at all pleasant. It was a great deal like a copse in the shadow of some bare mountain in Croatia. Almost any other place would be better; but he had to be here for mortification.

The youths dismissed him, and sauntered down the path, and indifferently he followed them. Behind them he crossed a humped bridge the railings of which had been twined out of water willow wands. From the bridge hung suspended paper japanese lanterns blotching with rain, and a gimlet eyed swan beneath was pecking holes into them. When he stopped to look at the swan the youths looked back, and waited.

They had removed their yellow helmets and their narrow, peaked heads with doormat hair upon them jutted toward him purposefully. With a new clarity he studied their miens and sensed the danger. "I suppose you want privacy," he said, to test them. Their anonymous but wholly unvirginal features remained unmoved. Their shoulders in the yellow glittering coats looked baleful. They represented something which he had never lost, and hence never would have to reject.

When they kept waiting and staring, he said desperately: "I expect you two are related?" not expecting an answer, because with them everything answerable was already completed.

Then he saw that they were waiting in front of a large gate, which he hadn't seen before through the murky foliage. It looked like a stockade gate. When he reached them, they went about in curtailed grimness unbolting the gate. In their actions together they were curt and spoke in monosyllables which sounded like: *il*, *kir*, *dit*, *hin*, *lib*, each and all with sharp 'i's. "Well here you are, sir," they said then. "Here's your gate. If that's what you're looking for?"

"Not actually. But if you insist," he said meekly.

"Of course not actually," they said impatiently.

If only their voices had something of a feather-whisper of pity in

them, but they were wholly intent on ushering him through the gate with zealous finality.

He walked through the gate, and turning, he expected to see them look menacing. They were yawning. He could still make some hurried adjustments; he could still resist being trapped here by his own negations and denials. There should be more to the final answer than the closing of a stockade gate upon him. His own execution couldn't amount to such a marginal finality.

Then the gate groaned shut, with a mild groan as from deep sleep overheard in half-sleep. So he was the witness and the victim both, but it was always that way with final realization.

With a chill of marrow and nerves he now saw the ravine at his feet. In the bottom of it were folded and jammed all manner of skeletons, of men and beasts and even children. In the soggy sassafras into which he had waded, something audible stirred with sounds of human sorrow. It commanded him to take heed and listen.

When he did, he wasn't honestly surprised that Karen was there, though he refused to suspect that she might have planned all this. Illusion was better and more cruel. She was there, standing there with authority, like a statue for some civic virtue. He lowered himself on a large boulder and prepared himself to listen.

"This happens to be far more real than you think," she was saying. "Because it is an implication. It was inevitable that you'd come here, and I was prepared. That too was a prediction my late husband made, when he chose a face for me one early morning."

"In those flannel pajamas," he shivered. "It sounds like ultimate intimacy."

"It is. You yourself tried to think that I'm having intercourse with death. I would call it union. You'll understand if you can make yourself walk across this ravine. I took the sacrament first, of course."

"No," he said.

"Or we could wait until dark. Real dark, not this dismal rhinoceros grayness. Because then you could cross unseeing, even if you smelled death."

Illogically she added: "In the very end he was really an old man, and everything that should be at least adequate failed him. And he started building himself heroes and heroines out of history and fancy. I prayed for him."

"Also early in the morning when he prepared your face?" he wanted to ask, but hurriedly he said instead: "I was terrified by those youngsters in their yellow slickers."

"You should be." She shrugged. "They were doomed before you were and with dispatch."

"Did they ever walk across this ravine?"

"They don't have to. Death was born into them. Yet they are covered with human flesh and the flesh has its needs. Unlike bones, the flesh is moist, in sentiments too. You do want me to instruct you about bones?"

"But this ravine is full of them," he protested.

"If you have the fullness of resignation, they become just one more tedium, a mere reversal. You'll faint and fail only briefly, when either of us goes crashing through a skeleton. At the moment it is apt to be me because I'm wearing high heels. Remember, you asked me to dinner. On the other hand, treading across drenched skeletons on bare feet also has its drawbacks."

It was amazing that horror and revulsion kept evading him, eluding her. He felt dedicated almost, ever since the gate had closed upon him. It'll be a long wait for night to come," he suggested. "And for what?" But he might as well have been reading the label in his hat, for all the effect his remark had on her.

It was raining harder. The gloom was nearly impenetrable. Close by knobby tree trunks sneered with Lord Byron mouths. But because he could no longer be conclusive, neither yet resigned, he felt degradingly elated. He comforted himself thinking: while there is aversion there is hope. While there is loneliness there is an answer. Love could never understand the inviolability of loneliness.

So in this curtained and curtailed gloom there was no real issue. It was simple to follow her down the brambly incline into the ravine. On the brambles were shreds and threads of clothing, even ermine and velvet. "Well, at least I won't burn," he giggled irreverently.

"Burn?" she asked. "That's Calvinistic. And you aren't prepared for burning either. Your tenets are faulty."

"If at this point I should tell you that Rock and I, before he married you . . ." he started to say, but his voice choked down his throat. He could do little more than grunt, and he understood fully that moment why those yellow raincoated youngsters had to speak to each other in

keen and sharp vowels, 'i's mainly. There was nothing between them to veil or choke off.

But the realization brought him to a tangent, and he said plaintively: "We could all have gone to Mother's house and humored her. Isn't there room for humor, too? And we could do it with all your faces well arranged, and my eyes polite, and whom would we hurt?"

She laughed. "With a billet-doux for all occasions, I suppose. And rosebuds during the preposterous month of June. Heather imported in February. And surmising about the weather through starched curtains. Humor, why we would humor God right out of heaven and he'd whip us." She plunged faster down the incline. Beneath or beyond the skeletons he could now hear water rushing. The winds here grunted like old water buffaloes, or whistled Robert Burns ditties through ribs and femurs. He wanted desperately to grab her hand, even if her hands would hurt like his mother's bony ones with all her emerald rings.

Instead, in the increasing gloom, she lost all color and shape, and it became impossible to commit anything.

"There's nothing of old realities left anyway," he wanted to cry. "All this is simply evil because it is finished. Here only nostalgia is possible. What do you expect to transpire, that Rock will rise up in his ridiculous flannel pajamas and pre-empt everything?"

Patiently she waited for him, and pointing at the bones, she explained: "You musn't try to understand it. It is all inchoate, and only so you can bear it. See, I don't feel any despair," and she started treading over the skeletons and the next moment he saw her leaping up the opposite bank. At that moment his foot crashed through the ribwork of a child. He knew it was the child he had been.

"I can't do it," he screamed, and jumped back, shaking himself free of the ribs. Not even looking where he was going, he turned and scrambled up the bank. He didn't stop until he reached the large gate and pounded on it with his fists.

The gate opened so suddenly that he stumbled to his knees. The two youths leaned over him, and both said: "Yes." Then the girl unstrapped his wristwatch and put it on her own wrist. The boy removed his tie and tucked it inside his tee-shirt. Then they lifted him up and laid him on the nearest bench. They covered him with their yellow raincoats.

He heard it then, the sly little bell, a vespers bell. It was as niggardly as life had always been, and it cowered, expecting to be denied. A moment later it assumed grave sibilations and obdurate little echoes which like a conscience could never be denied henceforth. "It's time for prayers," the girl said.

But the boy hesitated and felt at his biceps. He made some sort of wheedling, woobling and bubbling sound then, which added up to a realization between them. Ignoring him, they took great pride in the lad's muscles, while the rain poured down upon them. "Hi," they kept saying, as with a new discovery, which could never be repeated. They exchanged his tie and wristwatch, and then unbuttoned one another. Very soon they copulated with silent fury, as if death and love with them were the same.

He felt that he shouldn't be watching them. Pushing the raincoats aside he got up and walked out of the garden. The taxi was still there and his mother was waiting. "We shall have tea," she said. "I held the taxi for awhile. It's raining so." She searched delicately in her small jewelled bag for a cough lozenge and put it between his lips. She then told him how beautiful the garden was, as if she were molding her words out of butterfly wings. There could be no further understanding or forgiving, no further life or death, there was neither flesh nor bones. There was nothing to boil and nothing to eat. "I hardly think," she said, "Karen expected you to come back in all this rain." And a little later: "Send her a nice note. And some rosebuds perhaps?"

charles h. foster

Image to Clarify

HERE in the cider swelter of the fruit,
Bird-pecked and yellow, rotting by the tree,
A snake shell cracks and leaks a tiny root
That starts to slide across the wet debris,

Then stops to cower in the apple slime,
Among the dead pretending to be dead,
Image to clarify the place and time,
Its white shell glimmering on the compost-bed.

gil orlovitz

Meditation Before Her Death

I AM the last woman, she said.
I have given myself asylum ;
that is the least I can do,
for I have taken all the strength away from men by letting my breasts
grow long,
and I shall not let them be cut off.
When I die I shall have willed men, rather than the jawbone of an ass,
their Rib,
that they may smite about them in endless anger,
for having lost the last woman.
They will remember me in that I toppled down the phalli of their
pillars —
blind as I was,
captively young as I was,
gentle as I was —
and escaped to magically give myself asylum,
merely by murdering all other women.
The men were too busy burying their women
to observe the last one in asylum.
Yes, I think of my children ;
yes, I love them,
but I love my cooing crime more,
in that there can be no punishment.
Yes, I will soon die,
but what greater pleasure in so doing than to flow,
not as blood,
but as the slow yellow of my eggs down the clear-eyed faces of men,
for my death will have consisted in my having hurled my rottenness
at their faces,

smashing my lastingness on them.
They will need their Rib, indeed,
for more than anger;
they will need it to hide their nakedness.
And yet, for all of men, and my pleasure,
I shall not want my death so soon,
for even asylum takes of the world for being.
Even asylum goes mad with winter, summer, autumn and spring —
and my children will change into men.

What Will You Name Her?

Im the first person in the world to die.
I decree everyone shall die after me.

I wonder how some of those lower animals go off by themselves to die.
Im not sure I want company.
I guess Im part animal.
Of course, my mind is the hole I go off to die in.

Go away from the hole, husband.
You, too, children.
I might spit, and I dont really want to blind life with death because
theres enough confusion.

Im not very old.
Im not very young.
Im frightened — that age between.

Im trying to hate you in my last moments so I can live a little longer.
But will that work?
Will anything work now?
The pains are something like labor-pains.

What will you name her?

On Thursday Night

On Thursday night, husband, it will rain on my grave.
On Thursday night, in a dream, husband,
while you try, in vain, to dry my wet hands,
you will cough harshly, and scamper frantically up and down your
lungs

in a dugout, your eyes paddling
through a brilliantly-colored harem bayou
where it will be difficult to light a sigh
and you will ask me to decide which breath of yours I should draw
next.

But it will be Thursday night, and rain will be falling on my grave.
The night before Thursday, to bury me, you had to put me in a
restraining-sheet ;

and the night before that, to love me, you had to put me in a restrain-
ing-sheet ;

and the night before that, to give my children suck, you had to put me
in a restraining-sheet ;

and the night before that, to give me birth, you had to put me in a
restraining-sheet ;

do you, therefore, expect it to be clear on Thursday night ?

Take my word for it, husband, it will be raining on my grave on
Thursday night.

Buy a raincoat and lay it over my earth

because I do not want to wet you in your dream ;

I do not want you to run to the harem children for protection
because they have their own husbands and wives.

Plan to be alone on Thursday night and I will tell you how it was to
die without a restraining-sheet.

Where were you, husband, when I was so sane ?
Where were you when I was the belle of the balls?
when they had to scrape the muck off my eyes so that my fingernails
could scratch clean —
when I travelled with light ovaries over hill and dale —
when I was a fresh rainslip of a girl in the slimy deep —
when I could tell no fortunes except of palms first excoriated and dried
out in the sun so that if I smoked the lines I could foretell the future
by their wisp-fulfillment —
where were you, my husband, when the smoke cleared away ?
On Thursday night, husband, it will rain on my grave.
I had better wear your rubbers, now, so that the children will not
catch cold.

doris parsons

Tabula Rasa

SKY, STUPID as Locke's newborn imbecile,
Blue slate unlettered, pale and unimpressed,
Your pose as frontispiece speaks but partial
Truth — another universal to mistrust.

Doves mourn along their chiseled pediment
A bled, half-masted metropolitan sun,
Neutrals who blunt a perilous ridge of stone.
Now dusk weeds mask that wordless monument.

Habitués of chilly cells complain
But weather gridironed cycles of abuse;
Stale winter goads their passion to explain
Love's staggered syllable held latent, indiffuse.

Shoddy may black out stars, but fear keeps home
Whose windows wear too long a surly shade.
Another shroud is weaving. It will come
As unbound tapestry, age-bleached and frayed.

No sight forbears that wayward eloquence:
Doomed waste of casual garlands drifting down
Over academy and barn, asylum fence —
Bricks of the living, slate of the dead man's town.

Not every snowflake is symmetrical.
Purely congealed, their dying spokes suggest
Unmelting Form cast in a crystal dial.
Smooth souls of snow, we are dissolving dust.

Under the Bell Jar

High on a double bookcase, out of touch,
A lifelike oriole rode a twisted branch.
Sealed books threw back reflections of a glance
Hermetical as any bird in glass.

We skipped thick swaths of text between the plates
Whose clouds held eyebrows menacingly crooked,
But smiled on Samson shouldering Gaza gates.
All we like sheep were gone astray, but hooked.

Mutes for whom nothing was irrelevant,
Even the yellow sun (through filtering lids),
Found their own speech and language in a squint.
Informed illiterates are silent kids.

That carved Moor by the fireplace couldn't bite,
But weren't we brave to stick our fingers in
And test his fierce filed eyeteeth every night,
Docile, in hopes of hostile recognition?

Two views of the Pyramids were better than just one:
The stereopticon taught, "Use both your eyes."
Things might go on forever as they had gone,
But couldn't we hope they might go otherwise?

leonard unger

Grazie, Senator Fulbright

AS I SAID in an after dinner talk to my colleagues,
While I tried to grin the cliché into quotes,
Italy was a wonderful experience.

No, I didn't see Palermo or Ravenna,
But I saw Cagliari (in rain) and Bari (in sunlight).

In Cagliari a man sat in an arcade café
Drinking beer from a straw that was really straw.

In the Bari market a woman displayed an octopus
By bouncing it up and down in a shallow basket.

Then there was that time when I drank orange pop
After struggling up the cinders of Vesuvius.

Behind the Pantheon I saw a tribe of cats
Stalking the dank sub-level corridor,
One of them dirty white with a red face
From eating spaghetti out of *Il Messaggero*.

While sauntering with friends at night through the Roman ghetto
To view a famous palazzo — I think the Farnese —
We passed some nocturnal idlers near a streetlight
Who hailed us, Shalom. I waved, calling Shalom,
And moved on, thinking: History, Shalom means History,
As if one could call to fellow strangers a greeting,
A cordial familiar bewilderment known as History.

Ex Libris

Today I bought a book I shall never read.

In recent years I've bought a number of books
Which I just didn't get around to reading,
But this book I knew in advance I would not read,
Yet I deliberately bought the book.

It belongs on a shelf among some others,
All of which I have read in years past —
And it isn't merely that I've read those books
(As one reads a book) but we lived together :
I was on the shelf among the books
And they were off the shelf together with me.

Now the books fill the shelf.

I bought the new book (careless of limited funds)
The way a woman buys a missing piece of china
For a set that is never used.

I put the book on the shelf the way a dog
Buries a bone which he will never retrieve.

I am not sorry that I bought the book,
And I am not glad.

henry birnbaum

Southern Cross

1. **H**ERE below where
honeysuckle covers the Jesus Saves,
a kind of speed and memory
entwined about culture,
the wizened sit upon their anecdotes
making up time.
Their eyes sunk in backed-up sorrow
wish for change without motion,
all that caution of history
crippled into a posture
of looking at dry ground
and listening to screen doors.
Here where a tangle of stores
is crucified by highways,
the young ones hold gnarled branches
reading signs and counting cars.
The multitude is here divided
into a waiting.

2. Urbanity is wilderness
which screeches for organization
and relegates the mind to shelves
of prepared indifference.
He emigrated, awakened to childhood,
to bury boredom in the continuous
detail of earth, growing multivariant
about his peaceable whimsy,
the valley nourishing desire
and seasonal endlessness.

Here between mountains in the thicket
of double negatives, he adopted
the coverall camouflage of shuffling
lithe-edged hill people to sit
with pipe and gunsight upon
the simple movements in trees.
He came upon the prayer of bullfrogs
and was saved.

3. My rearview mirror
sees ribbons on blacktop and time,
a getting behind to distances of mind.
Here at the intersection
which is my brother's crime,
I seek the salvation of waters
and pray green weeds and woods
will restore. The silence of trees
has its station. I cut a paved swathe
through this sullen and shaken place.
The map will dedicate the back country
where a friend betrayed me
in this direction.

norman rush

MAN IS BLED TO FLOAT THE STATE

SPEAKING, Ro had Leon's head in his breath: he sent against it all the egg and meat he could raise in his teeth. He said, "You turned out to be a Gem!" But he said it to himself, reflectively.

A body of mild smoke hung over the shore; a sour even seawind played on them. They had exhausted the main view—an empty beach in late sun—and had studied all they could see, without standing, of a forked spit of black rock far to the right; to the left were beaches making a very gradual cape. They were on a concrete bench, the last bench in the line above the beach.

Ro stirred his fingers through his loaded breastpockets. Lately Leon had shrunk into Ro's opposite: Leon's face seemed half the width of Ro's, and except for a swollen eyelid was colorless. Ro was fresh, neat, ideally heavy, and looked at most twenty-five.

Ro drew his eyelids further in than he had so far, gave the effect of baring his eyes, threatening Leon with a new force. Heavy pangs of dislike seemed to shake him.

Whenever Leon moved a fine soap-fume left him: he was in a bleached workshirt, bleached white cotton pants with lemoncolored stains on the knees, sandals. Ro was welldressed.

Ro began, "You never admit a thing, do you?"

That was the first word, the opening of their formal Talk.

"What thing?"

"Just . . . you work very hard not to."

"But what thing though? I think I admit most things like anyone else."

"Well it's a new trait if you do. You cling to your ideas."

"O I do?"

"Which is a depressing . . . Way. I could tell you one thing about your ideas which I guarantee you would be true: but . . . I think, I ask myself, Why do it? You cling . . ."

"What ideas though? I have several."

"O, your ideas . . ."

"Which ones, exactly?"

"By ideas I mean your main ideas: social. You know that."

"What social ideas do you have in mind, that I supposedly have?"

"I said I could tell you one thing about your ideas which even if you admitted was true . . ."

"Please go on and say, Please!"

Ro bent around and continued intimately, "It occurred to me, What would you say was the main reason your various Socialists and so on get together and put out papers? have meetings and so on?"

"Ah, my socialism again: did you come four hundred miles to bring that up again? I can hardly believe it."

"Wait, will you? I asked you something."

"To get new people, is that the right answer?"

"In what way new though? How do you mean new?"

"People not exposed to the idea, I mean."

"Babies in a way, or children?"

"No! People not exposed to the idea for some reason or other. They failed to hear of it."

"Alright . . . Would you say hearing of it in some way improves you? : you'd have to say that."

"Is this going to take much longer, Roland?"

"Nono. Would you say it improves you?"

"Some ways."

"Do you want me to tell you this or not? You don't have to make faces which show . . ."

"Yes by allmeans, Tell me!"

Ro moved his head in front of Leon, to occupy all his vision: "The desire underneath is, or behind is, *to have children you can raise like yourself, to have mental babies to turn out like yourself.* O yes. O yes now. Yes Leon. Think it over."

"I can't believe you mean it: do you?"

"All I ask is you think about it."

" . . . O I see: you mentioned this to someone . . . for instance my mother, who said, O go down and tell Leon, tell Leon . . ."

"Your mother isn't a stupid woman."

"Yes she is, Roland."

"Well, now we can discuss something else."

"O, think about that and talk about something else? What?"

"Anything we want."

Leon quoted, "The great appear great in our eyes

Only because we kneel.

Let us rise.'

What would you say that was, Ro? If you teach that to someone, what would you say the sentiment of that was?"

"I don't see it has anything to do with what I said, with my point . . ."

Leon began again to quote, "The great appear great . . ."

"I know you said that: you mean what does it mean?"

"No . . ."

"You mean What it means if you succeeded in getting people to believe it?"

"Yes. Right."

"Well: 1, you believe it; 2, you get the next man to believe it, Right: so, you create someone who resembles you, which I believe is what I was saying."

"O by an idea like that? O hardly, Roland. You hardly do! The idea in that Idea is, There is no one over you!"

"Except the whole, say, Socialist Party."

"You can be a socialist and not be in the Socialist Party, Roland; that's been known to happen . . ." He stopped and said, "I just thought of what you are yourself. You told me what I am but do you know (with your ideas) what you are?"

"One thing, at no time since I started did I use that tone, Leon: please."

"Nihiloliberal is what you are: you don't believe in anything, really: you vote and so on, but you believe in nothing."

"O from whose viewpoint am I? The American Socialist Party?"

"By nomeans . . ."

"Then from whose?"

Leon said, in excitement, "Ontop you believe in the usual various things, Ro, but underneath in nothing and in doing nothing: Now you say I want to . . . reproduce? reproduce vicariously? something like that? but you don't. Which is interesting. Are you married yet? No. Are you having a lot of physical babies? No. Maybe you are, are you? No. Now is it healthier to want to reproduce yourself Ro or to not want to, which?"

With forced calm, Ro said: "Take an organization which has no chance of power . . . then take the people who just the same go on night and day working for it: what I said is, they have a hidden reason for doing it, which I gave."

"Is it worse to want to or not want to, for a man?" As he spoke, something else came to Leon. He said, "*Also*: what about your favorite church, the Romancatholic church? I believe you have the same thing: a whole class of celibates, right? without exception! converting . . . Would you mention that to my mother when you get back? as a favor to me? Unless you can show me some way that religion is different?"

Ro had retreated into mock amusement: his smile seemed to invite Leon to go on as he was doing. Seeing it, Leon assumed the same expression; they opposed smiles of the same kind for some moments. Abruptly Leon got up and stood in front of Ro: he let the smile slip, and said, "Also you should know one other thing, which is that in a way you've been arguing with a dead . . . person: or with dead ideas: I have new ideas."

"O? tell me: your mother is always very glad to know anything about you: you don't write much . . ."

"Well: this is only for you personally, not for her. It has to."

"Alright. Tell me what you mean."

Leon hesitated. "I don't know if I should go into this. Well . . . I could show you something I'm writing: that might be easiest: I don't know though . . ."

"O are you writing again then? What's it called?"

"The title isn't the important thing . . ."

"But what is it anyway?"

"I thought of, *Man is Bled to Float the State*."

"Really? . . . I doubt I'll read it." He showed that he felt himself completely victorious, sat back, looked past Leon at something which had become, at that moment, more interesting: the sunset.

Both men looked at their watches, prompted by the illumination of a mountainous isolate cloud out over the sea, a natural Work full of shadows, cliffs, vales, gilt on the sunlit face. The smallest ribs of sand on the beach cast shadow. The wind overturned and ran past them now from the land, as though reversed in its course by a natural sympathy with the great cloudy spectacle.

Ro tapped a sealed pack of cigarettes on the heel of his hand.

The cloud shone.

Leon looked for smoke over the canning sheds on the foreshore but saw only clear air: the cloud was alone in the sky! it seemed supernaturally solid and fixed. Ro refused to look at it any more: he impatiently sought to light a cigarette, outwaiting the fits of wind, huddling his body over the matchflame. Leon looked raptly at the cloud, and then at Ro, who was sucking a burn on his thumb. Leon said, "You never see clouds like that anywhere but here: we have them all the time . . ."

He was led to describe other qualities of the local coast, as a pretext for remaining on the darkening beach until the cloud, showing pyramidal now, was lost, borne out of view.



FALL, 1960, ISSUE

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NEW LIGHT ON FRESHMAN ENGLISH —
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david jones

A Hope for Theater: Notes on the Tyrone Guthrie Repertory Theater

For more years than one cares to remember, almost everyone who has attempted to diagnose and prescribe for the malady of the American theater has concluded that the one hope is to break the monopoly held by Broadway. The establishment of the off-Broadway theater was in effect a brave attempt to challenge the giant of commercialism on the very borders of his own territory; no doubt it seemed good strategy at the time, but it has not been entirely successful. Let's be frank. Off-Broadway theater is largely populated by people who have failed to get *on* Broadway. Its great drawing card is the presentation of plays which Broadway is reluctant to tackle. But all too often the actors lack the experience and technique needed to present them effectively. Sometimes in fact they do the play a disservice; one is left with the impression that Broadway was right not to tackle it. This is not to decry the industry, the self-sacrifice even, of many of these actors and directors; it is merely to acknowledge that they have been beaten by the system. There is no professional situation in America where they can learn and practice styles larger than naturalism. New York theater, both off and on Broadway, needs an infusion of fresh blood which can only come from outside.

Although New York is likely to remain the heart of American theater for a long time, it cannot be a healthy heart unless there is a much freer circulation of blood throughout the rest of the country. Aside from the spread of summer festivals on the east coast and the growth of little theaters on the west, there has been so far, to change the metaphor, practically no opening up of the vast American territory. What is needed most of all perhaps is the establishment of a pioneering theater of the highest professional standing in a location which is not dominated by Broadway or Hollywood. If it is to command respect immediately and exercise influence very soon, this theater must be started by someone whose reputation is

intact, someone who can not be suspected of leaving the New York scene because he is "washed out." So the decision of Tyrone Guthrie to devote his immense prestige and his prodigious talents to the establishment of a theater in Minnesota may be of great moment to the American theater and perhaps to the English-speaking theater as a whole.

A reading of Dr. Guthrie's autobiography, *A Life in the Theatre* (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), reveals why he wishes to be associated with this venture and what he hopes to achieve by it. It will give him an opportunity to put into practice what he has learned from observing and working with theatrical companies all over the world. It will be the crowning experiment of a lifetime devoted to the extension of the boundaries of theater, both literal and figurative.

A new theater will be built alongside the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, incorporating a system of staging so flexible as to allow plays of all eras to be produced in the most effective way. It will open in May 1962 with a season lasting through September in which a carefully balanced program of plays ranging from ancient Greek to immediately contemporary will be presented in repertory, i.e., in a rotation allowing several plays to be seen in any week.

Under such a system, it is possible to present plays which are not commercially feasible. The box office success of one play can compensate for the failure of another. An unsuccessful production can be buried without undue lamentation, since it does not mean that a group of actors and technicians will be out of work. Altogether, failure can be less of a blow. One is not starting from scratch for each production; the expenses of an individual are just additional to the basic running costs. Consequently, it is possible to experiment in a way prohibited by the standard commercial procedures, and without experiment there can be no artistic growth. One of the consequences may well be that playwrights will be encouraged to write in new styles.

Such a system has many advantages for the actor too. It develops his versatility, since there is much less typecasting than in ordinary productions. It provides him with opportunities to measure himself against the great classical roles, and the kind of stretching of one's abilities which this involves is essential to an actor's development. Every serious musician knows that he must master a number of classical works before he can consider himself a competent performer. Actors are less aware of this need because they have, especially in America, so few opportunities to work in the classics. This new opportunity should help to extend the range of American acting.

The company which Dr. Guthrie and his associates envisage will aim at teamwork serving the plays instead of productions featuring stars, and should attract people devoted to theater rather than those bent on self-aggrandizement. Possibly stars of congenial temperament will at first be invited to lead the company, but not doubt actors of star quality will eventually emerge within the team. This will

be a natural progression, however, and there will be a line of others behind them at various stages of development — struggling out of their cocoons, trying their wings, and so on. There should be no yawning gap between leading actors and the rest of the company of the kind which often mars ordinary commercial productions.

Such a development presupposes a more or less permanent company of actors, and Dr. Guthrie aims to produce the best features of permanent companies such as the Comédie Française and the Moscow Art Theater, but, by periodic infusions of fresh blood, to safeguard against the stagnation and the paralyzing tensions which are liable to develop in rigidly permanent companies. He hopes that the company will become a small community within, and closely linked with, the larger community of which it will be part. Metropolitan theater floats on the surface. New York and London are too big to have any genuine communal feeling. Moreover, most theatergoers on Broadway and in the West End are visitors. The Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul are not too big to have a sense of community and yet big enough to provide the nucleus of an audience. The new theater should thus be able to draw vitality from communal life and from the peculiar vigor of a provincial locale. There is every chance that what Dr. Guthrie calls a "solid, cosy family-feeling" will develop, a special kind of solidarity between actors and audience. The most satisfying kind of theatrical experience is that in which the audience feels involved.

Audience participation, however, does not necessarily mean, perhaps it never means, identification with the characters in the play. Yet theatrical naturalism proceeds upon some such assumption. At least it attempts to create characters and situations which the audience can parallel from its own experience. And this involves a severe limitation of drama, which can be larger, more various and more obviously meaningful than ordinary life. One of the most useful things that the Guthrie theater could do would be to create a style and a tradition of production larger than the naturalism which has been hampering the English-speaking theater for many years. The value of a traditional theatrical style is amply demonstrated in the work of the Comédie Française. French actors have a model for the performance of classical roles, a style going directly back to Molière. They may modify it, even rebel against it — indeed they need to from time to time to prevent it from ossifying — but they have a basis from which to work. They are not so liable as American and, to a lesser extent, English actors are to dissipate their energies creating a style out of nothing. Genuine progress in the arts usually stems, as T. S. Eliot has pointed out, from the modification of tradition by the individual talent. For numerous reasons, the English-speaking theater lacks an adequate central tradition of acting and production. One of the greatest needs of our theater is to create a style adequate to Shakespeare. We boast the greatest dramatist in the world; yet, except for an occasional *tour de force* like Dr. Guth-

rie's production of *Henry VIII* at Stratford-on-Avon in 1949, our performances of his plays are either reverently insipid or impertinently inventive. Not the least benefit which might accrue from the Guthrie theater is the creation of a balanced tradition of Shakespearean acting and production.

The creation of such a tradition is possible because the Guthrie theater is envisaged not as a commercial venture but as the establishment of an institution comparable to a great orchestra or art gallery. It will be an integral part of the Walker Art Center and will have a number of links with the University of Minnesota. One of the most promising tendencies of our century has been the tendency towards collaboration between men of the theater and scholars. But the collaboration has hardly gone beyond advice on individual productions, conferences and workshops. Scholars continually express annoyance at the frivolity and wilful wrongheadedness, as it seems to them, of many theatrical interpretations. Professional directors are liable to find too convenient refuge in the reflection that scholars have no conception of the practical difficulties of production and that, in any case, since there is so much disagreement among scholars, any interpretation is as good as any other. Even within the universities there is seldom as much cooperation as there might profitably be between drama departments and departments of literature. Yet the careers of Harley Granville-Barker and W. Bridges-Adams (both of whom retired from professional production lamentably early) suggest how fruitful the continued interchange of scholarly study and theatrical production can be for both. The Guthrie theater will provide an opportunity for such interchange on an institutional level. It represents a new hope that American theater will develop beyond a commercial proposition.

REVIEWS

neil myers

The Hungry Sheep Look Up

Bone Thoughts, by George Starbuck. New Haven: Yale University Press. Paper, \$1.25. *To Bedlam and Part Way Back*, by Anne Sexton. New York: Houghton, Mifflin. \$3.00.

Dudley Fitts, this year's Yale Series editor, says of one poem in *Bone Thoughts* that there's an "extraordinarily handsome complication of sights and noises here." There is, throughout Starbuck's work. He also says that these poems comprehend "a world of dejection and renewal, of despair and . . . hope," that they show "an intense and shaking kind of poetry, an art whose dissonances and wry dartings reflect a man awake in the nightmare of our day." They do nothing of the sort. Like our younger physicists, pilots, G-men, etc., Starbuck is attractive but just a little too cleanly proficient, basically content with his easy world and his job in it. He seems devoid of the experience of pain. He's too cool. There are hardly any strong feelings in this book, except the implicit desire to remain detached and to write poems.

Starbuck has appropriated the convention of the poet's despair over urban ugliness and moral decay, and has applied to it all the tinkling facility and vague, self-satisfied melancholy of *New Yorker* verse. He is pretty and spring-like, even when he tries to be angry. Sometimes his subjects force him near the centers of poetic power, particularly when he talks about nuclear destruction in "If Saturday" and "Cora Punctuated with Strawberries." He's an admirable technician; he's absorbed his Wilbur, Auden, Williams, Hopkins, and, in "Tapestry for Bayeux," a sprightly virtuoso piece, even his alliterative heroic verse. He sparkles; there's nothing dull about him, except a tendency to over-write—but our lean young engineers also tend to put on a little extra weight after 26 or so.

The problem is that wit rules this book. Starbuck's language flows as delicately and as effortlessly as an Ahmad Jamal concert:

You want some rewrite man to wrap up Boston
like garbage in old newsprint for the dustbin?

The Statehouse men convivial at Blinstrub's,
the textil men, the men of subtler substance
squiring Ledaean daughters to the swan-boats,
the dockers, truckers, teen-aged hotrod bandits —
what could he make of them, to make them Boston?

This is from "Communication to the City Fathers of Boston," one of Starbuck's strongest poems. It shows a genuine sensitivity to an appalling deadness. It seems relatively concrete; it talks about "garbage," "Blinstrub's," "dockers, truckers," etc., things of the mundane world which any decent poetic power must accomodate. There is a nice precision in the way the stanza fits into the general logic of the poem, into the problem of whether Boston is worth "wrapping up" against a bombing, whether its contemporary moral achievements justify posterity's, or anyone's interest. (The answer, in terms of the genre, is naturally no.) But everything here is too "nice," too obviously "true." There is nothing very controversial; the poem takes no chances, and there's nothing to get very excited about. Somehow we're looking at words, at "subtler substance," rather than at real substance. What's the *matter* with "Statehouse men," "dockers, truckers," etc.? What do they look like, sound like; what are we to say about them? Are we merely being given sentimental counters? Is this reality or a pose? What's to keep the reader from saying "so what?" What is here to *convince* him, besides wit: the clever way the "wrap-up" pun leads to garbage and then to "Statehouse men" and other trivial beings; or the bookish irony of Yeats's tired Leda against the "subtler" "textile men" and the humdrum "swan-boats?" And what are we to make of the bland abstractness of the last line? How do we make a thing "Boston?"

All the standard things happen in this poem. The author enters as the indispensable Tiresias narrator, self-pitying, impotent, mythological:

or even make of me, perched in these Park Street
offices playing Jonah like an upstart
pipsqueak in raven's clothing — First mate Starbuck
who thinks too much.

And the poem ends with the good old contrast of past to present:

Thinking of Thor, Zeus, Atlas. Thinking of Boston.
Thinking there must be words her weathered brownstone
could still re-whisper — words to blast their brassbound
brandishers on their pads — words by John Jay Chapman
scored on her singlehanded — words by Sam Adams,
Garrison, Mott, Thoreau blazed in this has-been
Braintree — Jamaica — Concord — Cambridge — Boston.

Such witty prophecy. But what's the point? Why all this fervent name-dropping? What "words"? What does Starbuck have in common with

Thoreau? His viewpoint is upstairs Park Street whether he likes it or not — and I suspect he likes it. Robert Lowell did all this immeasurably better, a few years back.

Anne Sexton, like Robert Lowell, clearly derives from the romantic tradition of the despairing poet. Unlike Starbuck and like Lowell, she writes to explore experience rather than to make poems of it. One thinks of Sexton and Lowell not in terms of verbal facility, ironic texture, and other technical sports, but in terms of sheer affective power, and of their inward pain.

It is startling to read a contemporary poem as one reads *La Belle Dame* or *Sir Patrick Spens*, mainly to see what happens. Explication of such poetry just isn't as interesting as the original poem, whatever one is going to do with it afterwards — fill a review (as I will), kill a 9:30 class, cop that promotion, etc. Explicating Lowell and Sexton is like explicating Thoreau or D. H. Lawrence; it helps, but the explicator seems to end only fooling himself:

For all the way I've come
I'll have to go again. Instead, I must convert
to love as reasonable
as Latin, as solid as earthenware:
an equilibrium
I never knew. And Lent will keep its hurt
for some one else. Christ knows enough
staunch guys who hitched on him in trouble
thinking his sticks were badges to wear.

The problem here is not how subtly rhetoric fits thought — it obviously does — so much as whether the result is true. In terms of the entire book, it is.

Sexton's power comes first from her sense of situation. Although she echoes Stevens and Auden, she also breaks from the symbolist-prophetic pattern of most contemporary poetry. She tells stories. Her book is full of undistinguished, unmythological people, in tensely dramatic situations which can be exploited only by an equally intense inward sympathy: a lonely empty-headed old woman, a speechless unwed mother, the author's own agonizing journey "part way back" from insanity and her complex relation to her dying mother and her unfamiliar child. Sexton's best work has qualities of the modern short story: the brutal tale like a forced confession, "better unsaid, grim or flat or predatory"; the compressed dramatic pattern of *hybris*, catastrophe, and recognition; the primitive irony of actual experience rather than the witty irony of meditation on it; the intense inward awareness of the teller; the concentration on a narrow circle of concrete persons and events; the forced brevity of narrative and lack of transition; the refusal to easily generalize. When truth bursts from the tight surface of such poems with the violence of sudden discovery, it seems the result of actual struggle.

"A Story for Rose on the Midnight Flight to Boston" is an extraordinary example of this power. The poker-faced frame describes the still unresolved flight, unknown characters, and a "story" about them:

Riding my warm cabin home, I remember Betsy's
laughter; she laughed as you did, Rose, at the first
story.

Catastrophe always hangs behind the prosaic surface of such poetry; it emerges without the slightest change of tone, and without transition. We move from reminiscence of a "humdrum/school for proper girls" to terrified comedy:

The next April the plane
bucked me like a horse, my elevators turned
and fear blew down my throat, that last profane
gauge of a stomach coming up.

When the basic "story" appears it "explains" the tension of the "warm cabin" just as psychoanalytic confession "explains" a normally inexplicable symptom. We are looking at drama, violent and astonishing, not at ironic symbolic illustration:

Half a mile down the lights of the in-between cities
turn up their eyes at me. And I remember Betsy's
story; the April nights of the civilian air crash
and her sudden name misspelled in the evening paper,
the interior of shock and the paper gone in the trash
ten years now. She used the return ticket I gave her.
This was the rude kill of her; two planes cracking
in mid-air over Washington, like blind birds.
and the picking up afterwards, the morticians tracking
bodies in the Potomac and piecing them like boards
to make a leg or a face. There is only her miniature
photograph left, too long ago now for fear to remember.
Special tonight because I made her into a story
that I grew to know and savor.

Despite the jolly airline ads, *this* is the world of flight, this absurd union of dull calm and implicit disaster. In the poem's honest, colorless language "things," not generalizations, appall. One usually associates such plain reportorial power with journalism, not with poetry. But in such poetry, we do not "read" so much as experience.

Where Lowell is Corinthian, Sexton is Senecan. Her diction is clinical, elemental, and humble. She talks about "innocence," "symptoms," "guilt," "suicide," her child who must "love her self's self where it lies"; the writer herself, "who was never quite sure about being a girl, needed another/life, another

image to remind." Her observations are intensely simple: "I needed you"; "But I lie"; "You kissed your grandmother/and she cried." The perfect soberness, the repose behind such speech makes both pretense unnecessary and grace inevitable, in the form of a return to health and a power in the telling of it. Her work suggests that the real sicknesses of life are at once irresistibly hard and simple, and that the refusal to face them creates the kind of sloppy obscurity that muddles most contemporary poetry. She gives the impression of facing everything. Her situation, "the antiseptic tunnel / where the moving dead still talk / of pushing their bones against the thrust / of cure," forces her to; self-pity and verbal irony seem irrelevant to it. She has passed through the standard romantic experience of despair, of spiritual and psychological death, beyond the condition of the neurotic who is too busy being ironic to be simple, to survive as a responsible creator, and as a major poet. She is perfectly outright in word and deed, and there seems little distinction between the two. When she left Bedlam, she carried a book:

I checked out for the last time
on the first of May;
graduate of the mental cases,
with my analyst's okay,
my complete book of rhymes,
my typewriter and my suitcases.

Even more than Lowell, Anne Sexton is on *that* side, rather than *this*, of sentimentality. Sentimentality means rottenness of subject matter; whoever is dominated by fear of it lives in a world of rotten subjects. Such fear has informed our literature since 1920, and is a major cause of its present conservatism. Obviously gifted contemporaries — W. D. Snodgrass and Donald Hall are good examples — seem trained to turn from wit only back to their original saccharine narcissicism. But the real choice is not to be either sentimental or ironic; it is to deny the proposition itself. Escape lies only in commitment, in, as Martin Buber would say, saying "Thou" to experience. Lowell and Sexton are too concerned with their subjects to worry about censoring their feelings, about laboring over trivial masking turns of phrase, about how silly or shameful or "out" their gyrations may appear. They conquer sentimentality by accepting feeling at the core, without any restraints except those demanded by sanity. If the alternative is madness, thinking — and writing — honestly becomes essential therapy. The real writer does not intend to prophesy, to be humanistic, socialistic, pastoral-tragical, light, heavy, dark, or medium. Fame may be the spur — it always is — but he writes for his health alone. Lowell and Sexton are uniquely powerful not because they are uniquely gifted — their major gifts are vicious cases of our universal neurosis and a tradition of Yankee honesty —

but because they write as Jeremiah had to prophesy, "like a fire shut up within my bones," literally to avoid madness.

Thus many of these poems smack of the asylum. The excessively wooden surface and the tension below; the gnarled, surrealist jumble of symbols; the hints of a strange history of human relationships; the sense of confession; the wild, driving power and desolation, can be found in most therapeutic poetry. What distinguishes Sexton's work from most of the genre is that she has survived. The sense of willed, unrelenting struggle dominates almost every poem here. Behind it is the quality which impels and is the end of the struggle, a rich awareness of precisely what Lawrence calls "tenderness," of love made real by consciousness of its necessity, in this book by consciousness of death. Death saturates the book; not only psychological death, like "glass, an inverted bowl" over the author's head, but time, the decay of Yankee families and houses, of abandoned old women, a brother, of Elizabeth:

You lay in the crate of your last death,
But were not you, not finally you.
They have stuffed her cheeks, I said;
This clay hand, this mask of Elizabeth
Are not true. From within the satin
And the suede of this inhuman bed,
Something cried, *let me go let me go*.

They gave me your ash and your bony shells,
Rattling like gourds in the cardboard urn,
Rattling like stones that their oven had blest.
I waited you in the cathedral of spells
And I waited you in the country of the living,
Still with the urn crooned to my breast,
When someone cried, *let me go let me go*.

Against such an intractable vision is a sense of love so hard and intense that it is almost tactile, always described in consciousness of inward strife, of limitations and ugliness, always earned by struggle. Love is needed here; it is not an indulgence — the love of a brother who

gave in like a small wave, a sudden
hole in his belly and the years all gone
where the Pacific noon chipped its light out,
of an old woman —
visiting the pulp of her kiss, bending to repeat
each favor, trying to comb out her mossy wig
and forcing love to the last —

or, in one of the most astonishing poems of this or any other contemporary book, the love of a speechless mother for a child she cannot keep and wants desperately:

Yours is the only face I recognize.
Bone at my bone, you drink my answers in.
Six times a day I prize
your need, the animals of your lips, your skin
growing warm and plump. I see your eyes
lifting their tents. They are blue stones, they begin
to outgrow their moss. You blink in surprise
as I wonder what you can see, my funny kin,
as you trouble my silence. I am a shelter of lies.
Should I learn to speak again, or hopeless in
such sanity will I touch some face I recognize?

One thinks of Sexton in terms of the specifics of her love as well as of her pain. The culmination of the book comes at the end, not only when she refuses to take Lowell's course of conversion, but when she describes her delight in her daughter. The contrast of this passage with the darkness which, throughout the book, has prevented it, gives it startling power:

I remember we named you Joyce
so we could call you Joy.
You came like an awkward guest
that first time, all wrapped and moist
and strange at my heavy breast.
I needed you. I didn't want a boy,
only a girl, a small milky mouse
of a girl, already loved, already loud in the house
of herself. We named you Joy.
I, who was never quite sure
about being a girl, needed another
life, another image to remind me.
And this was my worse guilt; you could not cure
nor soothe it. I made you to find me.

In the series of poems in part 2, love and death move together like a ballet, against the author's slow recovery of consciousness and responsibility. There is nothing in our literature like these last poems.

When Sexton's techniques are missing, as in *Venus and the Ark*, she produces direct, dull social satire. When they don't fully work, as in *The Kite*, *Where I Live* and *The Expatriates*, the result is cryptic and uninteresting. When they do work, as they do in most of these poems, they create major literature. They

vindicate Trilling's judgment that if the artist is sometimes neurotic, art itself is always health. This is one of the few books of mature poetry — of poetry which we can accept with total seriousness, directly relevant to the primitive problems of our basic lives — since the death of Lawrence. It is directly in the tradition of Thoreau; it flowers in the implicit knowledge that our moral problems are individual before they are social, that Hiroshima was just an extension of Bedlam. It assumes, in perfectly concrete terms, that we must painfully forge an inward peace, loving our "self's self where it lies," before we attempt any outward reform. Until individuals commit themselves to the discipline of such a journey "part way back," to inward honesty and responsibility of feeling, society will remain silly and murderous, and literature pompous, trivial, and dull.

john dennis hurrell

Books About the Theatre

Tyrone Guthrie. *A Life in the Theatre*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc. \$5.95. Martin Esslin. *Brecht: The Man and His Work*. New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc. \$4.50.

Long before he wrote *A Life in the Theatre* Tyrone Guthrie had acquired an impressive reputation as one of the most important men in the contemporary theatre. I had almost written, one of the most important *young* men, for despite his sixty years Guthrie's productions leave an audience with the impression of boisterous youthfulness; indeed, both his strength and his weaknesses as a director have been said by opposing critics to be derived from this exuberance. Guthrie's theatrical reputation will not be lessened by anything he has said in this book — rather the opposite — and the youthful spirit has been carried over from the stage to the printed word. As this account of his life makes clear, Guthrie's role in the theatre has always been that of a leader. He was a pioneer in the repertory theatre movement, a pioneer in radio drama, the man chiefly responsible for revitalizing the Old Vic, and perhaps the only man who could have ensured the unprecedented success of the Stratford, Ontario Shakespeare Festival. Now he is to begin what is virtually a new career by attempting no lesser task than changing the pattern of the American theatrical scene when, in 1962, he establishes the Tyrone Guthrie Repertory Theatre in Minneapolis, some thirteen hundred miles from what most actors and directors regard as the security of Broadway.

Perhaps it should be stressed here that Guthrie is a man of the theatre first, and an author second, for the book is not, from a literary point of view, without faults. The principal flaw is that Guthrie has really written two books. One is the story of his personal career, full of anecdotes and fascinating accounts of recent theatrical history (such as the chapters devoted to the Old Vic), and this book is similar to many other volumes of theatrical reminiscence. Its superiority to most of these comes by virtue of Guthrie having been involved in some of the most interesting developments in the modern theatre, and having worked with many of the most intriguing personalities of the stage. The other book, which lies tantalizingly embedded in the autobiography, is the author's analysis of the art of the drama. Although he is not a theatrical intellectual, in the sense in which that term is often applied to an actor like Michael Redgrave, Guthrie is a director who has always gone beyond his own present involvement in a particular production to consideration of the very nature of the art by which he earns his living. *A Life in the Theatre* is punctuated by these reflective pauses, each one occasioned by the commercial or artistic crisis that he is narrating. Undoubtedly, the theorizing is given added weight by the solidity and breadth of experience conveyed by the autobiography, but the result is an unfortunate weakening of the organization of the book, and hence of its effect.

For most readers, however, there should be no difficulty in perceiving that the author is a man who has something important to say on the art of the theatre. Take, for example, his remarks on the fallacy of "ideal performance," which go right to the heart of much of the criticism that has been directed at his productions, and justify his practice on theoretical grounds.

It is amazing how many critics, even good ones, in assessing the performance of a masterpiece, *Hamlet* for instance, assume the existence of an ideal performance, which fully realizes the author's intention.

The performance of a play is not merely the recreation of an already fully realized idea. Even assuming that a dramatic author has in mind a fully realized idea of all that his script may indicate, it would not be possible to achieve a replica of such an idea [because conditions of performance vary, and because there may be more in a work of art than "conscious intention"] . . . Often, I think, dramatic critics, while they sincerely believe that they have in mind such an ideal representation, really have in mind a sort of stereotype, deriving from previously admired representations.

This idea may not be profound, but in the context of the prevalence of the fallacy, especially in academic circles, it is a succinct expression of the plea made by many directors that the theatre be allowed to remain alive in its classical repertoire as well as its modern offerings.

In the background of the discussion is, of course, what Guthrie calls "the

divorce between the theatrical performance and the literary study of drama."

For about three hundred years educated people, partly under the influence of Puritanism, partly irritated by the shortcomings of almost every interpretation of a masterpiece upon the stage, have been inclined to divide into two isolated categories *Drama*, a minor but not entirely negligible tributary of the main stream of literature, and *Theatre*, a medium of entertainment largely concerned with the commercial exhibition of handsome men and women.

This all ties in with the theory, which survives from a period when the fight against material poverty was man's chief preoccupation, that life was divided into two mutually exclusive compartments entitled Work and Play. Work was serious and important because it aimed to better the economic conditions of both the individual and the community. Play was only important insofar as with no play Jack became a dull boy.

Textual criticism of Shakespeare is, as Guthrie points out, regarded as Work, while the performance of a drama, or the viewing of it, is Play — unless the drama in question is assigned reading in an educational institution, in which case the performance becomes a kind of appendix to the text, and hence morally permissible. How can the theatre be both Work and Play, Education and Pleasure? We should not need to be reminded how simple and basic is the answer to this, but many people do need reminding, and anybody who has the intention of bringing the classics to a wide audience without either vulgarizing or dehydrating them ought to be clear on his position. Guthrie certainly is.

The theatre should assert its claim to be educational, not because it is a short cut to examination answers, nor because it is morally uplifting, but because it widens the imaginative horizon by presenting ideas in the most memorable way. The ideas evoked by the theatre are, if the actors are doing their work adequately, primarily emotional. They drive consciously at the sources of pleasure and pain; and by that means produce impressions, not only far more vivid but also far more lasting, than experiences which are more purely intellectual.

And when one so frequently hears a work praised because of its limited appeal, or dismissed because it has appealed to too many, it is refreshing to be told so uncompromisingly how irrelevant to the nature of art such pseudo-critical positions really are.

According to this view [the Mandarin view of art], works of art acquire merit as they are enjoyable by fewer and better equipped connoisseurs, or Mandarins. The higher the fewer.

This view seems to me logically defensible, but runs counter to all

political and social principles upon which civilized society is built. It is, however, less absurd than its converse; that the greatest works of art are those which are enjoyed not by the smallest but by the greatest number of people.

In fact, do not both the Mandarin view and its converse imply a confusion of quantity with quality? I suggest that pleasure is always greater if shared; that the ideal number of sharers varies greatly with different kinds of pleasure; that the number of sharers in an artistic experience varies greatly with different kinds of works of art; but that the quality of a given work of art is not affected by the number of persons who come under its influence.

It was not, then, a desire to lead the theatre away from its popular base that caused Guthrie to espouse the presentational, anti-naturalistic form of drama, but rather a belief that here lay the true essence of the theatre. "It was, I discovered, charming, interesting and exciting not the nearer it approached 'reality,' but the farther it retreated into its own sort of artifice." Scattered throughout *A Life in the Theatre* are observations on the author's gradual loss of interest in naturalism, in the picture-frame stage, and in all that an Ibsen-bred generation had accepted as the normal mode of theatrical production. Perhaps one day Dr. Guthrie will set down the history of what has come to be designated "theatricalism" with his own experiences in the theatre as, so to speak, authoritative footnotes for it; in the meantime we are fortunate in having the present book, in which he does almost the opposite.

Discussion of the anti-naturalist movement leads one directly and inevitably to Bertolt Brecht. Martin Esslin's *Brecht: The Man and His Work* has already been widely reviewed and everywhere praised. That Eric Bentley has called it "the best thing that has yet been written about Brecht in any language" ought to be sufficient recommendation. The book is learned without being pedantic introductory to its subject without being oversimplification, and creatively critical without in any way neglecting the presentation of basic facts. Yet the way in which Esslin has chosen to organize his material shows that he, too, shares the current indecision of most critics about Brecht's achievements. No other dramatist—at least until the comparatively recent appearance of the new school of anti-drama led by Ionesco and Beckett—has provided such consistent examples of presentational theatre; yet, for most people, before he can be hailed as the great liberator of dramatic art, the content—the Communist content—of his plays must first be explained away. In classrooms across the country Brecht's dramatic form is discussed, his place in the theatricalist movement, his theories of Epic Theater; *Verfremdungseffekt* has almost replaced "aesthetic distance" as an obligatory term in the theatre student's jargon. The content is ignored: it would seem that Brecht was a playwright who was only accidentally

a Marxist, a man who could have written work of the same quality even if he had chosen to place his allegiance quite differently.

The validity of this assumption remains to be questioned. Mr. Esslin neatly — though not, I think, consciously — avoids the problem. The jacket of the book tells us that on one level "it is a brilliant critical examination of Brecht the man and the writer, showing how his commitment to his art always rose above his commitment to Communism," and this is a fair summary of what the author has done. Brecht's submission to Communist authority is shown to be "Schweikian"; his attempts to maintain physical independence, such as returning to East Germany only after obtaining an Austrian passport, are equated with the preservation of artistic integrity. But surely Brecht's concept of drama as a medium that could demonstrate the possibility of change in the world (a concept which led him to reject the "Aristotelian" drama), and his belief that this change could be wrought by Communism, *is* his art. Brecht may have committed himself to a political creed that he could not swallow whole, but he *had* committed himself, and he had committed his *art*.

The Schweik image, however, is a useful one, and Mr. Esslin never departs from it for long. Brecht is made into the popular idea of twentieth century man, never able to reconcile ends and means, outwardly servile but inwardly rebellious. The very chapter headings reveal the attempt to present a tormented and fragmented artist who will stand as the great representative of post-Descartes, post-Freud humanity in general, and of post-Weimar Germany in particular. "The Man," "The Artist," "Brecht and the Communists," "The Communists and Brecht," "Reason versus Instinct": these are some of the segments into which Mr. Esslin divides Brecht, not, I think, to understand him by scholarly analysis so much as to conquer him emotionally. If the Brecht who on the surface is totally committed can be shown to be at heart uncommitted, he can be accommodated to the traditions of a theatre that he professed to despise. Like everybody writing on Brecht, Mr. Esslin remarks on the fact that audiences always sympathize with Mother Courage when they are supposed to detest her, and like everybody else he comments on this as one of the differences between Brechtian dramatic theory and its actual effect in the theatre (another dichotomy, incidentally). But he tries a little harder than most critics to convince us that the real Brecht of intuitive human sympathies was here asserting himself subconsciously against the Marxist Brecht pledged to reason. This is perhaps the keynote of the book: it is Bertolt still, but Bertolt analyzed — and not always in the literary sense of the word.

richard foster

Neither Noble nor Savage, but Nice

The Noble Savage, I. A Meridian Periodical. New York: Meridian Books, 1960. Paper, \$1.50.

In the past two or three years an almost astonishing number of small "serious" magazines have been born — several times more, I am sure, than those which have perished. Minnesota has been curiously fecund in a special variety of them — the *humorous* serious small magazine. We have an *intentional* humorous serious small magazine in *The Carleton Miscellany*, which nevertheless tends to be rather unamusing; and we have a more or less *unintentional* humorous serious small magazine in the regularly funny *The Sixties* (until recently *The Fifties*).

The Carleton Miscellany, edited from Northfield, Minnesota by some of the people who once edited the famous *Furioso*, has had a certain air of unhumorous sadness about it from the beginning. The sadness of middle-aged college boys trying to recapture the past. But the *Miscellany* has lacked the cartoons and semi-blue jokes of the typical undergraduate humor magazine, and what remains is the kind of mannered foppery that makes you drop your eyes when you encounter it at a party. To have this sort of thing stamped there stark and black on page after white page, and to imagine the rewriting, editing, correcting, proofreading — all the machinery of abstract intention that brought it before your eyes with such singleness of will and dedication — well, the feeling is a vaguely unsettling one, to say the least. It does not conduce to lightheartedness, certainly. And it recalls in your historical memory the genuinely funny quality of some of the true "little" magazines — like *Furioso*, for example — of the past.

The Sixties, edited from Pine Island by some solemnly sarcastic young men who say they want to overthrow poetry-as-it-is succeeds far better, in spite of its only partly humorous intentions, in being much more consistently funny than the *Miscellany*. On first coming to Minnesota two years ago, my wife and I picked up the first issue on a downtown Minneapolis news-stand and chortled happily all the way home on the bus. Wonderful! we thought. A little maga-

zine that burlesques little magazines! There were starkly grim versified confrontations of naturalistic reality amusingly signed by *Time's* good boy of poetry, Donald Hall, and that other elegant success story, W. D. Snodgrass; there were stern, wordy editorials about the necessity of concreteness in poetry; and there was a group of vague, self-pitying exclamations in verse form offered as translations of, as I recall, some contemporary Scandinavian poets. Even the contributors' notes, with their coy turgidity and compulsive encyclopedicness, were a delight. And there was just enough of the predictable funmaking at the expense of *The Saturday Review* and such like to convince us utterly. We were terribly dismayed and unbelieving when one of the contributors told us no, many of the things we had found very funny had been meant quite seriously.

The solemn, objectless irony of *The Sixties* and the foppish silliness of *The Carleton Miscellany* meet on the common ground of the triviality of their dislikes. While the world threatens to go up in the flames of race hatred, nationalist greed, and nuclear accident, these two magazines take clever potshots at J. Donald Adams' and university pedants. The *Miscellany* is smirkingly weary of all kinds of seriousness, and *The Sixties* becomes hot-eyed and high-voiced about poetry that is not "concrete." Such easy, easy things to become cute or upset over! The concreteness war was fought more than a generation ago, and was left thereafter to the university course in Freshman Composition. And of course *The Miscellany's* sorts of distresses have been expressed for years now by *The New Yorker*. Surely we don't now need a small circulation quarterly for *that*!

These worries, worries about the collapse of literary intelligence and integrity into smartness and empty pretentiousness, were on my mind when I heard about the plan of Saul Bellow, Keith Botsford, and Jack Ludwig (the first and last are Minnesotans) to edit a new "serious" periodical called *The Noble Savage*. But how, I thought, could a magazine with such a title be more than smart and pretentious? The sensibilities that create the currency of the *Miscellany* and *The Sixties* make it impossible for all of us, do they not, to think "Noble" and "Savage" without also fashionably thinking "Irony"? I found when the magazine appeared that I had not been so very far wrong. Though the satirizable extremes of *The New Yorker* and *Evergreen Review* have been largely avoided, most of the contents of *The Noble Savage* could have appeared comfortably in *Esquire* or *Partisan Review* or even *The Atlantic*.

Even so, much of it is good enough — pleasant or intelligent reading: neither noble nor savage, but nice. Of course, there is some junk, as there perhaps has to be in all magazines. The chief disappointment is a long, dull, mechanically imitative, and loudly unreal "Southern" piece by Ralph Ellison. There is also, in the fiction, quite a bit of (Savage?) concentration on Western matters — ghost towns and cowboys and slangy lingo — including a piece by Wright Morris that is supposed to be like Sherwood Anderson but comes out instead

a little like Bret Hart's combinations of thigh-slapping humor and chest-slapping sentiment, and another by Edward Hoagland that reminds me of the tall stories of Mark Twain slathered over with the tonalities of Stephen Crane. Both of these are almost aggressively "American" in their disposition, as if the National Literature impulsion of the nineteenth century had for some unimaginable reason been revived.

The Ellison and Morris contributions suffer also from a decidedly fragmentary quality; they are parts of novels—Morris's already published, Ellison's on the way—though they are not identified as such by the editors. Another fragment of a novel is Jack Ludwig's "Confusions: Thoreau in California." While it shows an often brilliant ferocity of imagination, it is rather brittle and turgidly styled; Ludwig is at the moment a kind of soulless Nathanael West—his world and its characters coming out grotesque but vague. More than a third of *The Noble Savage*, then, is made up of chunks of novels. A bad situation, surely. And for the reader not to be told what he is getting makes it still worse.

I liked best the fiction of Mark Harris and (to my own surprise) Arthur Miller. Harris's (is it, too, part of a novel?) is the superbly jargon-rich testimony of a detective investigating a neighborhood grocer who, under the joking rubric "Brain Surgery Practiced Here," rejuvenates, like a kind of Pan, the emotional lives of his customers-in-need. And Miller's is about a couple like Marilyn Monroe and Arthur Miller, who take a walk along the seashore where, to Marilyn's grief, fish are being caught in great nets. She stiffens her lip and tolerates the doom of those that are going to be "used," but she cannot accept the fate of those few that are tossed aside to die on the sand. She tries throwing them back. Arthur, in sympathy for her pained compassion, tries to help. They are just getting a little ahead when a friendly dog bounds up and starts retrieving. They distract him with a stick and finish the immediate job, knowing, between tears and laughter, that they have both won and lost the bout, and that life—and love—are inevitably defined by death. It may be, thinking as I was of Marilyn and Arthur, a couple I like to think of, that I hallucinated myself into feeling that this little story was both honest and touching. I recognize that its content is only a hairline away from idiocy. But it is written with a Lawrencian brusqueness, simplicity and compression that makes it go.

There is no "literary criticism" in *The Noble Savage*, but there is plenty of essay—the "criticism of life." And I think the essays come off rather better than the fiction, though here and there some stumbling occurs. The only true flop is Herbert Gold's kitschy tidbit on "How to Tell the Beatniks from the Hipsters," which is so full of puns, giggles, handsprings, and funny hats that it sounds like a piece from *Vogue for Boys*. Harold Rosenberg's intelligent and finely styled "Notes from the Ground Up" strikes me as a bit abstract and prim in its contention that our modern preoccupation with the human self

rather than with the "Idea" has crippled our ability to think free of sentimentality so that we can move toward tragic imagining; perhaps I feel he is right about the effect, but wrong about its cause. Harvey Swados writes with stark, serious, almost painful moral involvement about the first Patterson-Johannsen fight as a symbol of our national decline; it is a compellingly odd essay, the author's total moral seriousness lavished upon an object of almost total moral unimportance. Josephine Herbst's "The Starched Blue Sky of Spain" is a fine piece about the Spanish Civil War, stuffed with gossipy reminiscence (Hemingway and other Americans living the good life at the Florida Hotel, etc.) and vivid impressions. Miss Herbst doesn't have much to think that is of interest (the American idealists were pathetic Communist dupes), but she sees everything with a vividness and simplicity and wholeness that makes her almost as good as our best travel writers — Ford, Lawrence, Orwell, and Lawrence Durrell. But the star essay in the volume is Samuel Butler's beautifully modulated Swiftian reflections on the follies and meannesses of man, the economic beast, "Ramblings in Cheapside." It is striking that the only real piece of nobility and savagery in the smart, up-to-date *Noble Savage* should have been first published in an English periodical of the 1890's.

I am not quite right about Samuel Butler's providing the only occasion of true noble savagery, for there is John Berryman's superb suite of "Twelve Dream Poems." They are worth the price of the whole volume. They remind you of the great French decadents, and of Rilke, and of the vigorous jagged language of Pound tumbling fiercely from slang to sublimity. And yet Berryman is unforgettably himself in them. Together they form a small lyric narrative or drama of the horror of madness and its human survival. "Write as short as you can," his persona cries in one poem, "in order, of what matters." They have put up the guardrails around him, and the storm and nightmare of consciousness is beginning to fade before the drowning onslaught of sedative. This is the tragic outcry of the compelled human imagination — a touchstone, perhaps, for our time. And a good rule for the only other poet in the volume, Howard Nemerov, to follow. Nemerov's contribution is a weak, wordy cocktail of sweetened Kenneth Fearing and diluted Auden, which does no justice to either of its constituents. It is an exercise in well-schooled, fashionable, and absolutely vacant irony called "Life Cycle of the Common Man" ("Roughly figured, this man of moderate habits,/This average consumer of the middle class . . ."). Yes, it says just what you would expect. The only reason I can imagine the editors having had for wanting to print this pallid thing is to set off Berryman.

On the whole, *The Noble Savage* is a good buy. It is much of the time enjoyable, occasionally very good, and in Butler and Berryman, at least, it absolutely transcends itself. But it shouldn't be mistaken, either by its readers or its editors, for what it isn't. It isn't a serious "little magazine," if "little magazine" means,

in the tradition of *Broom* and *transition*, experimentation, swarming rebelliousness, and an absolute indifference to commerce. Nor is it a serious literary magazine like *The Sewanee Review*, where experiment combines with tradition, and where both are flanked by that abhorred thing "literary criticism." It is something far more common than either of these: it is fashionable, and as that it is commercially viable; and above all, it has the unmistakable marks of imitation seriousness. It is an instance of what Harold Rosenberg, in the pages of *The Noble Savage* itself, is rather fashionably dissecting in his "Notes from the Ground Up": the idle, fashionable feinting at rebellion, the habitual inconsequential gestures of self-critique, now enjoyed, thanks to the nearly universal experience of a college education, by our bourgeois mass as a disguise covering its inherent unintelligence, moral triviality, and material selfishness. And we can thus all be sure that *The Noble Savage* won't betray us, and that, despite its savage Barnum title looming across its noble purple cover, it won't do our coffee tables a bit of harm.

roy a. swanson

Villon: Irresponsible and Bald

The Complete Works of Francois Villon, edited and translated by Anthony Bonner. New York: Bantam Books. Paper, 50¢.

The Bantam Villon is a pleasant package of virtues. It includes the Longnon text, with few changes, facing an accurate and unpretentious English translation, a reliably informative set of notes, numbered lines, a short biography of jewelled concision, and a tasteful cover design after Alex Tsao. Best of all, Anthony Bonner, the translator, has bothered neither to impress scholars nor to imitate modern poets.

The only blemish in this delightfully inexpensive volume is a would-be embellishment in the form of an introduction by William Carlos Williams. This is sketchy, condescending, and valueless. Williams, once styled a fake poet by Robert Graves, has here faked a portrait of Villon's mind, for example,

Rather than yield to the bitter pressure of the circumstances he had to write to keep himself warm; his mind required it.

The striking thing is that, as with all such men, he never let a thought enter his head of smudging the surface of his art.

Other examples of the vacuity permissible to writers with established names are: "But good writing is rare." "To him a man was a man." "He was French, as French as was Rabelais."

Mr. Bonner's comments on the text and his free verse translation promise not to appeal greatly to scholarly and poetic savants. He calls modern scholars a "kill-joy lot" and observes laconically that they love to point out the grammatical blunders in Villon's attempt at Old French (*Le Testament*, "Ballade en vieil langage françois"). Many of his notes are near duplicates of those found in scholarly editions (e.g., the note on *Ave salus, tibi decus*). But others are quite different; one, in fact, includes a fifteenth-century musical setting to a Villon rondeau. He is much more consistent on Villon's loss of hair than, for example, the scholar Chaney, who says at one point, "Disease probably caused Villon to lose his hair," and shortly thereafter, "Evil living or privation, or both, had caused Villon's hair to drop out."

Both scholars and critics will or ought to study Mr. Bonner's translation of *Le Jargon et Jobelin*. With respect to these slang poems, "one can see," the translator says, "why so many scholars have thrown up their hands in despair." Critics resident on the doorstep of absolute poetry suffer similar despair over slang. But it is apparently as much a part of poetry as "obscenity" is a part of literature. Louis O. Coxe betrays his ignorance of slang in one part of classical literature by complaining about Rolfe Humphries' slangy translation of an Ovidian word; such ignorance, in turn, betrays an anti-slang prejudice, or at least a tendency toward it. This type of complaint cannot be lodged against Bonner. The "Poems in Slang" must be translated in slang. Viewing individual lines and words, ripped untimely from the contextual matrix, scholars may throw up their hands higher as they sink deeper into despair, and old-maidish critics will cast a jaundiced nay. "Come now, must we construe *Allés ailleurs planter vos marques!* as 'shack up some other place'?" No, scholars, we could say, "Go plant your footprints someplace else!" No, critics, we could say, "Dance off on undetermined dust!" Mr. Bonner does not get excited; he merely translates. Intelligent readers will set him an item in their testaments. His slang is weak here and there, elsewhere even puerile. But he nowhere sounds like a college professor displaying his tolerance by a colloquial descent from dignity.

It is rewarding to have the complete text of Villon available and to have available in the same book a translation which is trustworthy in its enlightenment and unassumingness.

Allen Tate asks, "For what is the poet responsible?" Of the poet Villon, William Carlos Williams would say, "for 'the minute dilemmas of his words in finding the exact niche for themselves into which they must have fitted to satisfy

his spirit." In answer to his own question, Mr. Tate says, "He is responsible for the virtue proper to him as a poet, for his special *arête* [*sic*, for Christ's sake]: for the mastery of a disciplined language which will not shun the full report of the reality conveyed to him by his awareness . . ." Item: a poet may have a "special *arête*" (fishbone, ridge), but surely his responsibility as a poet is not to this. Item: "special *arête*" would be redundant. Item: would not the poet, rather than "the mastery" or "language," "not shun the full report of the reality conveyed to him"? Item: awareness is a quality or state, not a conveyance.

Mr. Bonner refrains from asking such a pointless question and from such mode of critique. Nor does he ask the more reasonable question, "For what is the translator responsible?" But he defines his responsibility. The modern poet and critic will find that "the translation given here is as close to the original as readable free verse will allow." It is *verse* and it is *readable*. The scholar will find that Mr. Bonner has "avoided scholarly discussions, and limited [himself] to what would inform or interest the reader." He does *inform* and *interest* the reader. There are those who must find this definition pedestrian:

En eulx il n'ye a que refaire,
Si s'en fait bon taire tout quoy.

william stuckey

Some Recent Fiction

Happy Families Are All Alike, by Peter Taylor. New York: McDowell, Obolensky. \$3.95. *Generation Without Farewell*, by Kay Boyle. New York: Knopf. \$3.95.

When Peter Taylor's first slim volume of short stories appeared in 1948 it created something of a sensation. This may have been partly because of Mr. Taylor's youth (he was only twenty-one at the time some of these pieces were written), but it must have been primarily because *A Long Fourth and Other Stories* contained some impressive writing. I remember liking all of the stories in that first collection except "A Spinster's Tale," which seemed contrived and

dull. But for a long time afterward I remembered especially the story "Sky Line." I was haunted by the thoughtlessly cruel way a teacher told a boy that his mother had "died under the knife," and by the way the empty flower baskets blew about the porch after the funeral. Upon re-reading *A Long Fourth*, I find "Sky Line" and the title story as moving and as powerful as they were when I read them more than a decade ago. They seem to me, in fact, the kind of stories that will last.

In recent years there has been, I think, a lack of interest in Peter Taylor's fiction. At least one seldom sees his name included among those currently thought to be "our best younger writers." This decline of Mr. Taylor's literary stock may be explained in part by the thinness of his out-put (one novel, two short story collections and one play in thirteen years) and by the fact that many new young writers have appeared on the scene since 1948. But after reading *Happy Families Are All Alike*, I am inclined to think it may also be because Mr. Taylor's later stories are not as interesting nor as successful as his earliest work.

In *Happy Families Are All Alike*, a collection of ten fictional pieces that appeared originally in the *Kenyon Review* and the *New Yorker*, Peter Taylor is at his best when he is writing reminiscence stories, either in his own person ("1939") or from the point of view of someone who resembles him, a writer ("Je Suis Perdu," "Heads of Houses") or a grown man looking back nostalgically and ironically on a past experience ("The Other Times"). Along with "Guests" (which is not reminiscence) these are the most interesting stories in the collection. They are smoothly written in an intelligent conversational style. There is nothing contrived or forced about them. In fact, one gets the impression that Mr. Taylor has probably lived most of these experiences himself or has carefully observed others living them and that he is now giving them back in a slightly modified fictional form. This convincing, life-like quality is their principal strength.

But if these stories have a serious limitation — and I believe they do — it is their lack of intensity. I am not sure why this is, but even the best stories seem a trifle dull. The reason may be partly the kind of unintense people and situations Mr. Taylor usually writes about and, perhaps also, his leisurely manner of spinning a story out — both "The Other Times" and "Heads of Houses," though rather interesting, are much too long for what they *do*. Also, after reading several of these stories at one sitting, I began to tire of the smooth, unemotional style and to wish for a striking image now and then or a spark of emotion. Anything to break through the tight-lipped, reasonable flow of language and engage the reader's feelings and imagination directly.

The least successful stories in *Happy Families* are those that are obviously imagined fiction: "The Walled Garden," a monologue delivered by an old lady, "Promise of Rain," told supposedly by an old-fashioned father who can't under-

stand his teen-age son, and "Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time," told by a wide-eyed, credulous neighbor of an eccentric old couple. All three of these stories are unconvincing in the way Hawthorne's and Dickens' worst fiction is unconvincing. The author knows only too well what he wants the characters and scenes to *mean*, but because he has not imagined the particulars subtly or powerfully enough, the stories are little more than melodramatic allegories. Since there isn't space enough to comment on each story, a brief examination of the worst one, "Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time," may make this clear.

The theme of this story is a favorite, almost a standard one with other Southern writers: the passing of the old order and the insanity that results when people try to live in the past. To illustrate this theme, Mr. Taylor has invented an eccentric brother and sister, the last members of a once rich and powerful family still living in the midst of an exclusive, walled-in neighborhood. For some reason (probably symbolic), this couple gives a party each year for the children of the best families which, for some equally implausible (and probably symbolic) reason, the parents of the children are afraid not to let their children attend. This is the way the old couple speak to the children when they are about to introduce them to the promised refreshments:

"Now, my good friends," he says, "let us eat, drink and be merry!"

"For the night is yet young," says his sister.

"Tonight you must be gay and carefree," Mr. Dorset enjoins.

"Because in this house we are all friends," Miss Dorset says.

"We are all young, we all love one another."

"And love can make us all young forever," her brother says.

"Remember!"

"Remember this evening always, sweet young people!"

"Remember!"

"Remember what our life is like here!"

And now Miss Dorset, with one hand on the knob of the great door which she is about to throw open, leans a little toward the guests and whispers hoarsely:

"This is what it is like to be young forever."

The rest of the story, which is equally absurd, has to do with the breaking up of the Dorsets' traditional party by a young outsider who sells newspapers and does not belong to one of the "best" families.

My favorite of the ten stories in *Happy Families* is "Guests." This too deals with a subject that has been somewhat over-worked in contemporary fiction — the contrast of city and country people, to the advantage of the latter — but Mr. Taylor has managed to make the country people so convincing and life-like that, despite the relative commonness of the theme, the story is interesting and even moving.

On the rare occasions when Kay Boyle's fiction is favorably noticed by critics, it is usually her style that is singled out for praise. Miss Boyle does write remark-

ably well. *Monday Night* and *Plagued by the Nightingale*, to mention two of her best known and most frequently admired works, are beautifully and sensitively done. And even in her less impressive books written with an eye on the market place, there is a professional ease and fluency of language not found in much contemporary American fiction. But Miss Boyle is not merely a fine stylist. In her best work, it seems to me, her style is never noticeably brilliant; it is always subdued, always subservient to the creation of scenes and characters. One seldom feels, either, that Miss Boyle's stories or novels have been carpentered to fit a carefully worked out thesis. The best of her fiction is convincing and lifelike; the "meaning," seldom forced or imposed, rises—or seems to rise—naturally out of characters and actions, as though the author had actually observed the people and events just as she writes about them.

What is especially remarkable about this—Kay Boyle's ability to write so convincingly of life—is that, unlike most contemporary novelists, she is politically liberal even in her fiction. I do not mean that she writes propaganda, though sometimes she does fall into clichés; what I mean is that she appears to be so deeply committed to a liberal social and political view, that it profoundly affects the way she sees life and the way she writes about it.

Judging from Miss Boyle's fiction (I know nothing definite about her private views), she appears to be deeply committed to some ideal of social equality, personal freedom, universal tenderness or love—it is difficult to label what is usually subtle and complex—and she sees in the world about her the brutal violation of those who embody these ideals. Again and again in her fiction we are shown sensitive individuals, who respond to life feelingly rather than conventionally, attacked and defeated by tough, well-insulated barbarians flying the banners of custom and tradition: There are children whose best impulses are crushed by adults in the name of duty and common sense; wives who are shut out of their husbands' lives and forbidden the society of other women; lower class, superior men who are doomed by a class system to serve inferior masters interested only in maintaining their own physical and social well-being. There are also in Miss Boyle's pages characters who hate each other simply on the grounds of race, nationality, and even profession—usually, one sees, because these individuals are so deeply and unconsciously a part of the established social and political order in which they live. It is only rarely that characters are able to break through the snarl of custom and prejudice and to react honestly and feelingly to one another. And such communications are as brief as they are rare. Society, class, custom, prejudice almost always triumph over those who, as one of Miss Boyle's characters says, are "on the side of civilization."

In attempting to state Kay Boyle's major ideas I have oversimplified what is, in her best work at least, not an idea nor even a belief but rather a diffused, almost imperceptible vision of life. It is only by standing off and examining several works that one begins to see how it guides the structure of a story or

novel and controls the action, motivation, and even the description of characters and scenes. It is this pervasive social and political vision, I think, as much as Miss Boyle's remarkable style which gives her fiction its powerful ring of authority. One doesn't simply grasp the "meaning" of her best stories and novels as an idea or theme; one *feels* them, as she must have felt them, deeply, perhaps unconsciously as some writers are said to feel the restorative power of nature.

Generation Without Farewell, Kay Boyle's thirteenth novel and twentieth book of published fiction, deals more consciously and more conventionally with the familiar conflict between the civilized and the barbarians. Her protagonist is a German newspaperman named Jaeger, a sensitive, intelligent "internationalist," who falls in love with Catherine Roberts, the wife of an arrogant American army colonel. Like several of Miss Boyle's heroes rolled into one, Jaeger attempts to break through the hateful barriers of nationalism (Jaeger loves America as he loves Mrs. Roberts), of caste (Colonel Roberts hates him because he is a civilian), and class (Jaeger tries to persuade a local *Graf* to help procure an iron lung for his stricken groom). He is defeated on all counts: the colonel forces his wife to leave Germany so that Jaeger and Catherine's love is never consummated; and the *Herr Graf* tells him to let the Americans "bear the onus of the iron lung." The past, the traditional barriers to human affection and understanding, are too firmly established to be scaled by two such sensitive individuals.

There are some good things in *Generation Without Farewell*, as there always are in Miss Boyle's books, even her worst; the description of the German country side, the bombed out cities, a party given for the local German dignitaries, a frightening swarm of *Africa Korps* veterans on scooter contraptions begging outside a ruined railway station—these and some other scenes are convincingly rendered as though the author had actually been present and observed them. But the main plot and the principal characters especially are as unconvincing as the standard Hollywood movie.

Colonel Roberts, for example, is usually the stereotyped military man, hard drinking, insensitive, crude, but at other times he is made to talk like an amateur psychologist, in as stilted and grammatical a way as a story-book hero. This is the way Colonel Roberts talks on a hunt when he learns that a fierce boar his party is after is "about the size of a large dog":

"Thank God, my wife isn't here!" the Colonel exploded with a show of joviality. "If she heard that, she'd come right back from Paris and take it home as a pet! She's always befriending the outcasts, the lame ducks, the maladjusted. That's why I gave her a week's leave," he said. His blue eye was colder than metal as he looked at Jaeger. "I would say this particular boar was maladjusted, wouldn't you, Jaeger? I would say he was introverted—you know, unable to mix with his

own kind. . . ."

It is clear, I think, how Miss Boyle means us to react to this passage and to Colonel Roberts, and even though we may share her feelings about the standard military type, the Colonel is such an obvious fake that it is hard to dislike him. In fact after Jaeger's attempt to seduce Mrs. Roberts, it is difficult not to sympathize with him just a little and to feel that perhaps he is justified in packing her off to the States, even if it means the end of a tender international relationship.

Jaeger is more believable than the other characters, though I am inclined to think that this is simply because we are told more about him and not because he has been convincingly rendered. Since Miss Boyle often identifies her point of view with Jaeger, she can simply *explain* him without obviously doing so. Early in the novel, for example, she tells us that the patched German houses were "as alien to him, these close-mouthed dwelling-places, as the entire country was," and that "no matter how long he lived he would speak of the honeysuckle he passed, and the fruit trees on the other side of the stone walls, in a language used perhaps like a hand to shield his face and heart, but which he had come to believe was more explicit than his own." This language is the "American lingo" picked up from jukeboxes in Colorado where Jaeger was a prisoner of war. "'Mares eat oats, and does eat oats, and little lambs eat ivy' was the vocabulary that touched his heart and made him grin." Jaeger, Miss Boyle says,

was done forever with the vainglory and the black possession of the Nibelungs of his youth, he wanted speech to be as simple as that. He wanted to say "hi" to whatever grim, defeated faces leaned over spade or hoe in the German gardens he passed. To free himself of the old, accursed heritage of class, he wanted to face himself every morning in the cracked mirror in his furnished room sustained by a casual, pseudo-American identity.

The most incredible, and also the most irritating character in the novel is Seth Honerkamp, an idealistic American civilian who is in charge of the America House, a place maintained by private American money, where books and phonograph records are made available to bombed-out Germans. I suspect that Honerkamp is meant to be a sympathetic character, for he is full of the best intentions, a dedicated, self-sacrificing man who loves art and music and wants these cultural advantages given to *all* Germans. Honerkamp is even able to persuade members of the conquering American army and some ordinary German citizens to cooperate in transporting the iron lung for Christoph Horn, the *Herr Graf's* star groom. He also organizes a drive among the German townspeople to collect funds to buy an iron lung from America, and even though he is fired from his job at the America House, he continues to supervise the German workmen in setting up a giant "thermometer" which will record the contributions. Miss Boyle assigns to him this valedictory:

"When the lung arrives it must be given a ceremonious welcome," Honerkamp said, as if speaking aloud the behests of his final testament. "It will come by train from Hamburg, and the *Herr Oberbürgermeister*, and the *Herr Direktor* of the *Krakenhaus*, and all the children of Fahrenbach must be at the station to receive it with songs — yes, singing — and flowers in their hands. If that is corny, well, that is all right, as long as they learn from that reception at the station it is their property, not American, and not an adjunct of the German medicos, but theirs, acquired because they walked from door to door for it, defying everything their history had established for them, just as you too will continue to defy it, Jaeger."

A good deal more could be said about the improbability and the absurdity of Honerkamp, but I believe it sufficient to say that the above speech is typical of the stagey way he speaks throughout the novel.

I have saved for last a brief comment on the character of Catherine Roberts because she illustrates another disturbing quality of *Generation Without Farewell*, a sentimental "slickness" that has marred some of Miss Boyle's other novels and short stories (*Avalanche*, *His Human Majesty*, and a number of pieces in *Thirty Stories*, especially those in the "American Group: 1942-1946"). It is fairly clear how Catherine Roberts is meant to "work" in the novel. She is supposed to be a kind of ideal human being, beautiful, sensitive, uncontaminated by class, caste, or nationalistic prejudice. But she is never convincingly presented. She is simply a stereotype from the lore of advertising and commercial fiction: the beautifully groomed woman, hatted and gloved, who moves gracefully through scenes like a guest at a garden party. The following is a description of her at the time she and Jaeger first met and "fall in love":

The mother was slightly taller than the girl, and her hair was auburn, wavy and dark and incredibly alive with health as it rippled back from a point on her square brow. It was the hair that betrayed without a glance being given, a word being said, the hot fire of love to which the outcast, the defeated could come to warm themselves in comfort for a while. The silky threads of her hair escaped the pins and the copper net of light cast by the sun, and wound like honeysuckle tendrils in her white neck and at her carefully made ears.

In spite of some competent writing and a few interesting scenes, *Generation Without Farewell* is a very disappointing book, and it is depressing to think that it came from so talented a writer. Kay Boyle's fiction deserves to be better known, but anyone not familiar with her work would do better to read the earlier novels and stories: *Plagued by the Nightingale*; *Monday Night*; *Gentlemen, I Address You Privately*; *The Crazy Hunter* (included in the paperback *Three Short Novels*); and about half of the stories in *Thirty Stories*, which has recently been issued in paperback.

brom weber

Unhappy Mark Twain

Mark Twain and "Huck Finn", by Walter Blair. Berkeley: University of California Press. \$7.50; *Mark Twain and Southwestern Humor*, by Kenneth S. Lynn. Boston: Atlantic-Little, Brown. \$5.00; *The Amiable Humorist: A Study in the Comic Theory and Criticism of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, by Stuart M. Tave. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. \$5.00.

Both Mark Twain and his age considered "humor" to be an entertaining mode of expression but of little consequence. "Satire," on the other hand, was serious, and Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain) yearned desperately to be a satirist, to be serious and profound. The age forbade satire, however, unless compassionate and benevolent like George W. Curtis's *Potiphar Papers* and Howells' *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, works by friends of Clemens. So unhappy Mark Twain wrote "humor" and damned his funnyman role. Yet, despite the pressures exerted by his age and himself, Mark Twain's "humor" was permeated with serious comment and profound emotion. If the 1880's for example, treated *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as a children's book, it has since been explicated as an imaginative rendition of the tense conflict between urban industrialism and rural agrarianism, between social constraint and individual freedom, slavocracy and democracy, the heart and the mind.

The serious components of Mark Twain's "humor" were visible enough to his contemporaries and to later readers and critics, yet even such a perceptive critic as Van Wyck Brooks compassionately flayed him in *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* (1920) for having chosen to be a "humorist" instead of a "satirist." The difficulty which arises in attempts to deal adequately with Mark Twain stems from a critical theory which errs in valuing "humor" as the equivalent of a straightjacket permitting only superficial intellect and emotion. We owe a great deal to Constance Rourke for her development of a typology of nineteenth-century American humorous characters in *American Humor* (1931). When she admitted that her greatest theoretical debt was to Bergson's *Laughter*, however, she encouraged adherence to an essentially negative approach to "humor" and "laughter." For Bergson had held that laughter was "incompatible with emotion," that comic

characters could be no more than superficial types, that comedy* was merely an aggressive weapon for insuring social conformity, that comedy was neither art nor life. Miss Rourke also asserted that she had written *American Humor* "without attachment to abstract theory"; she thus perversely made a virtue of her anti-historical unwillingness to recognize that Bergson's judgments not only reiterated much of nineteenth-century America's own conception of "humor" but that they also prevented her from taking into significant account the literature and theory which had preceded and influenced nineteenth-century American humor.

The volumes of Walter Blair and Kenneth S. Lynn accept Mark Twain as a "humorist" without an active concern for a fresh look at "humor" and thus do not help us comprehend his "humor" more fully. Within recent years, as it happens, we have been given a monograph on Thoreau's "humor," a dissertation on Faulkner's "humor," a book on Melville's "humor"; Constance Rourke, despite her Bergsonisme, had earlier convinced us that it was neither eccentric nor disparaging to consider as "humorous" portions of the works of such serious writers as Poe, Hawthorne, Emily Dickinson, Robinson, and James. Serious critics have assured us that fantastic, ironic, witty, absurd, burlesque, satiric, farcical, funny, comic, laughable, and grotesque elements render such serious writers as Dostoyevsky, Mann, Evelyn Waugh, Kafka, Joyce, Svevo, Chekhov, Bellow, Conrad, Nathanael West, Stephen Crane, Hemingway, and Anderson either partially or wholly "humorous." If the writers cited are "humorous" to any degree whatsoever, the limiting nineteenth-century view of "humor" which tormented Mark Twain and has hamstrung his critics is patently anachronistic and deserves to be embalmed in etymological history.

Stuart M. Tave's excellent study of the mutations of "humor," its variants and its relatives, in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England provides a necessary groundwork for comprehending the low valuation set upon "humor" in nineteenth-century America. Mr. Tave's book is in fact an essential companion-piece to Herbert Brown's study of the antebellum sentimental American novel and William Charvat's study of the binding grip of English critical theory upon the shaping of antebellum American critical thought. As Mr. Tave convincingly demonstrates, English thinkers and imaginative writers of the neo-classical and early romantic periods did not regard earlier notions of "humor" as absolute; they ceaselessly subjected the term to exhaustive analyses in accordance with changes in philosophical and social thought. The general view which resulted carried "humor" far from the robust, critical character which it had possessed in English and other national literatures prior to the eighteenth century. "Humor" became something naturally optimistic, sympathetic, cheery, and benign; in the course of the metamorphosis it was also discovered that

* A variant term for "humor."

"humor" was intrinsically lower in nature and value than "serious" tragedy.

This revised definition of "humor" has governed, haunted, and misled many Anglo-American writers; it is, regrettably, still with us, though at times the negative view that "humor" is intellectually and emotionally superficial is varied by the negative view that "humor" is violent, hostile, vicious, and destructive. We need to recall that Hawthorne, Melville, and even Mark Twain were familiar with a vigorous and profoundly complex literary "humor" antedating that produced under the aegis of the bourgeois-sentimental conception of the mode; it was a "humor" to which they were instinctively drawn. This suggests that our oft-thwarted giants were out of joint with their times for aesthetic reasons which have not yet been delineated. In the midst of our critical concern with the various ideological, psychological, and social factors affecting imaginative creation we have unnecessarily slighted the omnipresent aesthetic desiderata which bent these writers as surely as did vestigial agrarianism, sexual desire, the idea of progress, or the need to earn a living.

Kenneth S. Lynn's study of Mark Twain and the Southwestern tradition of "humor" which produced him follows the Rourke pattern. Like Miss Rourke, Mr. Lynn writes vividly and provides many illuminating insights; one of the most interesting of these is his stress upon the continuity between "Injun Joe" in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and "Nigger Jim" in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. But these valuable specific contributions are often obscured by Mr. Lynn's apparent reluctance to take a firm theoretical stand on the nature of "humor." When matters of theory are raised they are presented equivocally, as being useful for the argument immediately presented but without further warrant: "the familiar generalization that comic art views life from above is at least a partial truth" (p. 6); "Whatever its defects as a general theory, Bergson's insistence that comedy stands midway between life and the 'disinterestedness' of most art . . . says a good deal about Longstreet's sketches." (p. 63) As in the case of Miss Rourke's *American Humor*, the anti-comic theory of Bergson hangs heavily over the book and ultimately Mr. Lynn seems to agree that "humor" is not art. This finds expression in the statement that "politics is the key to Southwestern humor," in the treatment of humorous literature as political document, and in the forcible conversion of humorists into political writers. Though Mr. Lynn is assuredly flexible in his aversion to the rigidities of systematic aesthetic theory, he has often crippled his not inconsiderable literary judgment by systematically imposing two social types engaged in dialectic combat — the "Gentleman" and the "Clown" — on the materials he examines. One cannot have any objection to the elucidation of political and social motifs and ideas in any body of literature; it is rather staggering, however, when a book dealing with literature declares that "To convert the entire community to the temperate values of

Whiggery was the ultimate purpose of Southwestern humor . . ." (p. 65.) Unhappy Mark Twain, politico!

One does not finish Walter Blair's book with a sense that it has made Mark Twain's "humor" any clearer than did Mr. Lynn's book. But where the latter was weakened by an excessively simple conceptual scheme which violated rather than clarified diverse figures and an extended time-span, Mr. Blair's study at least has the virtue of telling us a great deal about only one book, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Mr. Blair seems not to care for disputation over thematic interpretations of *Huckleberry Finn*. But he has definitively established the facts concerning the sporadic composition of Mark Twain's masterpiece; he has discovered many of the writer's sources and shown how they were imaginatively converted; he has done much more useful spadework and provided the starting-point for anyone who will henceforth care to criticize Mark Twain's intentions and achievement with a responsible knowledge of the essential facts.

Short Reviews

D. H. Lawrence, The Failure and the Triumph of Art, by Eliseo Vivas. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1960. \$4.75.

Mr. Vivas seeks to provide an antidote to the Lawrence cult of Leavis, Spilka, *et al.* He praises the novelist of *Sons and Lovers*, *The Rainbow*, and *Women in Love*, and damns the major work of the later prophet. His rambling, highly personal essays are often maddeningly imperceptive and smug, frequently penetrating, and almost always — whether right or wrong — stimulating.

—N. M.

Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory, by Edwin Honig. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1959. \$4.50.

The move to reinstate allegory proceeds apace, most significantly now in exercises of practical criticism where the viability of allegory is simply assumed by the critic, and the honor of the label is unquestioned. However, the cautious critic still disguises the type under other names ("fable" is a current favorite) —

an indication that what is praised in fact may be feared in theory. In view of this, it is encouraging to find such a book as Honig's, which is an ambitious attempt to formulate a theory of allegory: what allegory is, how it works, what its aims are, what its cultural relations have been. Presented with density and breadth of reference, Honig's discussion is perceptive and challenging, and it includes by the way many acute critical analyses of specific works by Spenser, Melville, Kafka. Such an attempt to establish the theoretical dimensions of an ancient and perennial literary form is one that criticism has needed; to say that Honig does not fully explore the dimensions he brilliantly suggests is only to say that he has, so far, written only one book on the subject. Doubtless *Dark Conceit* will excite varied reactions of praise and blame, support and refutation: it is a very exciting book.

—S. Y.

Surrealism: The Road to the Absolute, by Anna Balakian. New York: Noonday Press, 1959. \$3.00.

Readers familiar with Mrs. Balakian's *The Literary Origins of Surrealism* will find her new book uninteresting in its repetitions of the earlier work and disappointing in its presentation of new material. The first section of *Surrealism* recapitulates, in summary and oversimplified form, her original work on Lautréamont, Saint-Pol-Roux, and Apollinaire; the second and final sections present general observations on the poetry of Breton, Aragon, and Eluard, with incidental remarks on surrealist painting. The thesis of the book (and a significant departure from the emphases in *The Literary Origins of Surrealism*) is that surrealism is distinct from symbolism, and superior to it, by being an optimistic theory of life and art. If this is an accurate definition of the spirit of surrealism—and I doubt it—the demonstration is not persuasive. The weakness of Mrs. Balakian's thesis would be modified if the reader were given any genuinely perceptive readings of the poetry, but her critical method (paraphrase and approval) keeps the book at a consistent level of superficiality.

—S. Y.

The Exclusions of a Rhyme, by J. V. Cunningham. Denver: Alan Swallow. \$3.00.

I have just seen one mistaken review of Cunningham's collected poems that, though it rightly compares him with Swift, finds him to be all discipline and no disorder. This easy polarity simply does not provide an adequate basis for understanding him. Mr. Cunningham is perhaps the most Roman poet we have ever had in America. He knows who he is, whom he hates and loves, what disgusts him about himself and what pleases him. And above all, like a true Roman, he can say all this about himself with a coldly personal but absolutely civilized

perfection of detachment and wit. This superb little book creates one of the most fascinatingly unpleasant and chillingly brilliant personalities I have encountered anywhere in recent lyric poetry. In fact, it makes one of the most perfect occasions of harmony between discipline and disorder that I know: the disorder of an arrogant and complexly difficult human self perceived and articulated within the order of an almost cruelly precise and concise discourse. Cunningham is a self, and his poems are wholly realized moments of piercing self-confrontation. He is a minor poet, of course; but he is an extraordinarily unusual one for our time. He is antidotal, and should be read purgatively by those scores of his fashionable, mannered, pompous, sentimental younger contemporaries who reap the prizes for saying so little so often and so wordily.

—R. F.

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Parm Mayer, of Alma, Michigan, has published poetry in a number of little magazines and has two book length collections ready for publication.

Richard Lyons has published two books of poetry and teaches at North Dakota State College. He is also a painter, and is editing the *Artists of the Midwest* series for *The Minnesota Review*.

Frederick J. Hoffman is best known for his books on the Twenties and Freudianism in modern literature.

Allen Tate's Collected Essays have been recently published, and a reissue of his novel, *The Fathers*, has just appeared.

Charles H. Foster, who teaches American literature at Minnesota, is the author of a definitive study of Harriet Beecher Stowe, and is at work on a study of the impact of Abolitionism on the American Romantics.

David Jones' book on T. S. Eliot's plays has just been published by Routledge, and is being distributed in the United States by University of Toronto Press.

Sally Daniels has published stories in *Sewanee Review*, *Quarterly Review of Literature*, *Perspective*, and other magazines.

Gil Orlovitz lives in New York. His most recent book is *Selected Poems* (Inferno Press).

Brom Weber, author of a biography of Hart Crane and editor of the Crane letters, is working on a book on American humor.

Dennis Hurrell is editing a collection of essays on Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams to be published this winter by Scribner.

Henry Birnbaum has published poetry in *Sewanee Review*, *Poetry*, *Chicago Review* and many other magazines.

He has a book of poems ready for publication.

Leonard Unger, of the University of Minnesota, is best known as a critic. His most recent book is *The Man in the Name*. He spent the summer writing at Yaddo.

Morgan Blum, also of the University of Minnesota, has published verse and criticism in *Kenyon Review*, *The Avon Book of Modern Writing*, *Accent*, and others.

Neil Myers teaches at the University of Minnesota.

Roy Swanson is translator and editor of *The Complete Poems of Catullus*.

Richard Foster has published poetry and criticism in a number of magazines.

William Stuckey is in the English department at Hamline University.

Norman Rush publishes here for the first time. He has just completed a novel while working part time as a cataloguer of rare books for a New York book dealer.

